



THE DIVINE REALITY

ISLAMIC THEISM & THE MIRAGE OF ATHEISM



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Definition of atheism



Atheism

atheism /eɪθɪz(ə)m/ noun. not a theist; someone who does not believe in a god or gods.

- Academically, there is no consensus for a specific definition of atheism.
- However, from a practical viewpoint, to disbelieve in god/gods can yield different classifications.

Atheism as a Knowledge Claim

atheism /eɪθɪz(ə)m/ noun. not a theist; someone who does not believe in a god or gods.

- In this sense, an atheist is someone who makes a knowledge claim – “there is no god.”
- The claim is a positive assertion, and it requires some sort of argument / evidence to support their position.

Agnostic Atheism

atheism /eɪθɪz(ə)m/ noun. not a theist; someone who does not believe in a god or gods.

- An atheist who is not convinced by any theist arguments.
- This seems to be far removed from atheism and is entering into the realm of agnosticism.
- Holding such a position would imply that if a good argument were offered for God's existence, they would have to accept it.

Life-style Atheism

atheism /eɪθɪz(ə)m/ noun. not a theist; someone who does not believe in a god or gods.

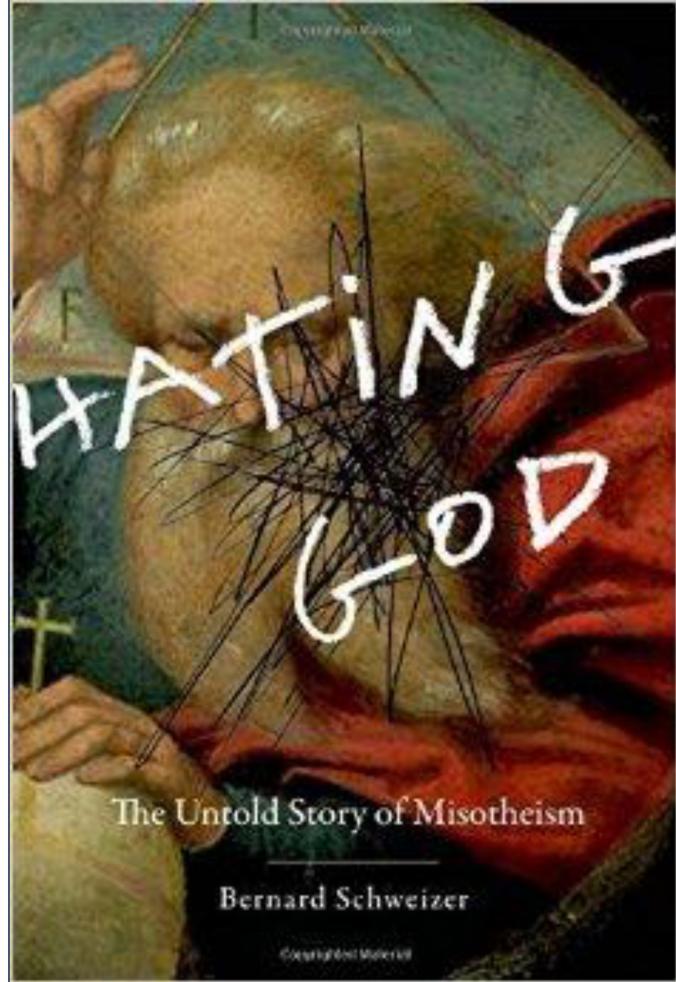
- If an atheist disbelieves based on mere choice, in the absence of any rational investigation, then how does that differ from any other belief, whether it is the belief in fairies or astrology?
- **NOTE:** the practical definitions proposed here are not binary; there are varying degrees of each type of atheist. They can also be described as having one or a combination of these definitions.

Misotheism

- This is a religious rebellion that has been lurking in the dark.
- This type does not necessarily reject God's existence; rather, they hate God and wish He not exist.

misotheism /eɪθiːz(ə)m/ noun. a hatred of an intervening god or gods

Misotheism



- Associate Professor, Bernard Schweizer, through extensive research of prominent thinkers and writers, concludes that misotheists' struggle with the idea of a loving, compassionate God in a world of evil and suffering.
- The motivation for their hatred of God is due to being “generally motivated by admirable humanistic impulses”.

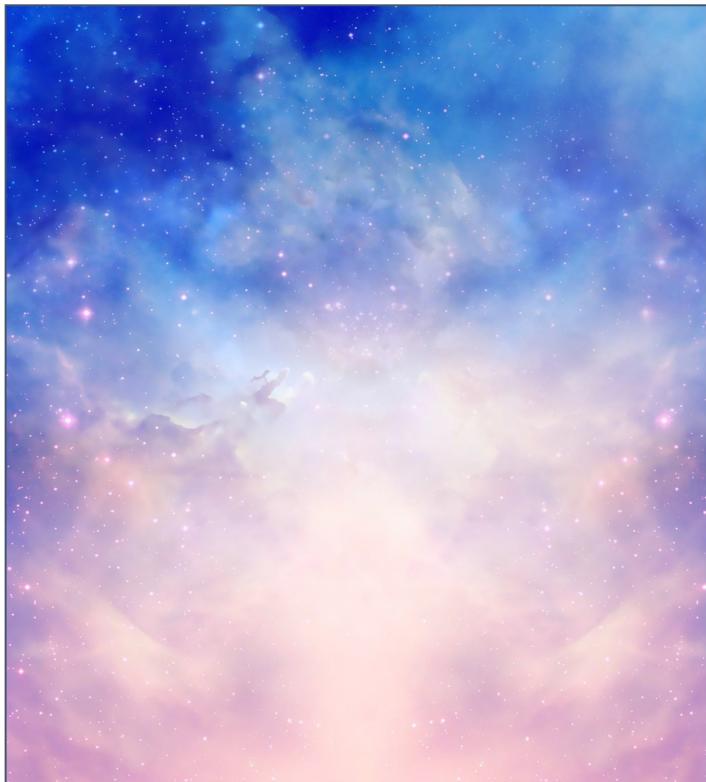
Egocentrism



“The situation is different for the misotheist. To him, the incompatibility of widespread evil with the image of a benevolent God is a real problem, not merely a case of hair-splitting theological arguments. Misotheists are genuine accusers of God, and they will hold him accountable for random evil and undeserved suffering. Thus, atheists and misotheists come to the question of God’s role in human suffering from opposed directions: the unbeliever would say that the misotheist makes an invalid claim based on fiction. To the misotheist himself, precisely because he is a believer, God is not a scapegoat but an accomplice or an instigator of evil.”

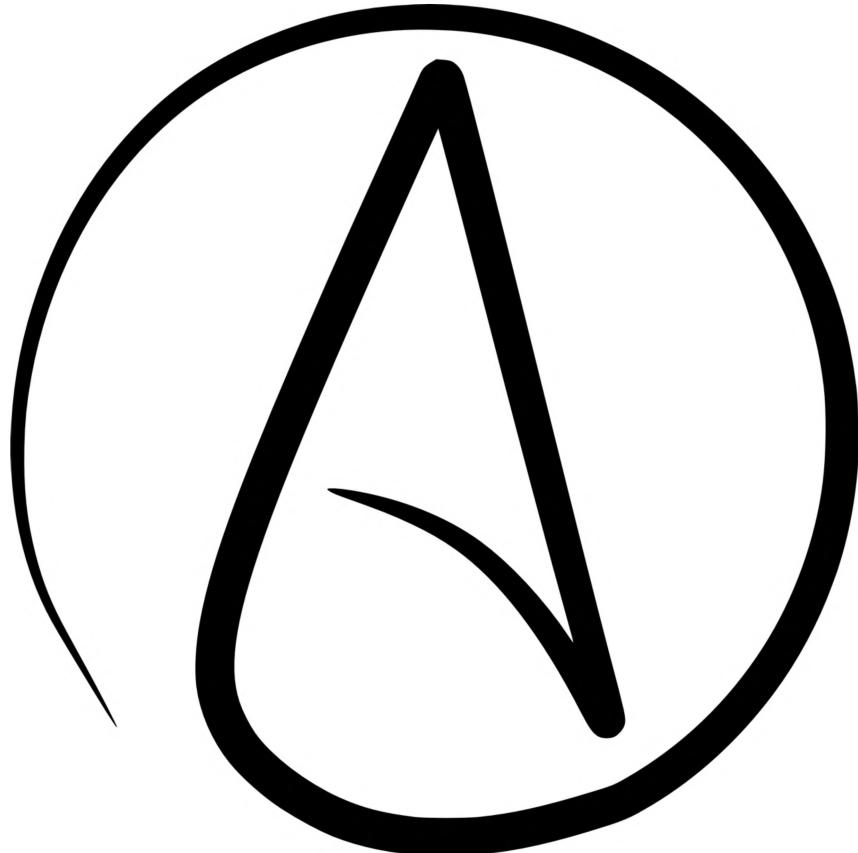
Bernard Schweizer

Philosophical Naturalism



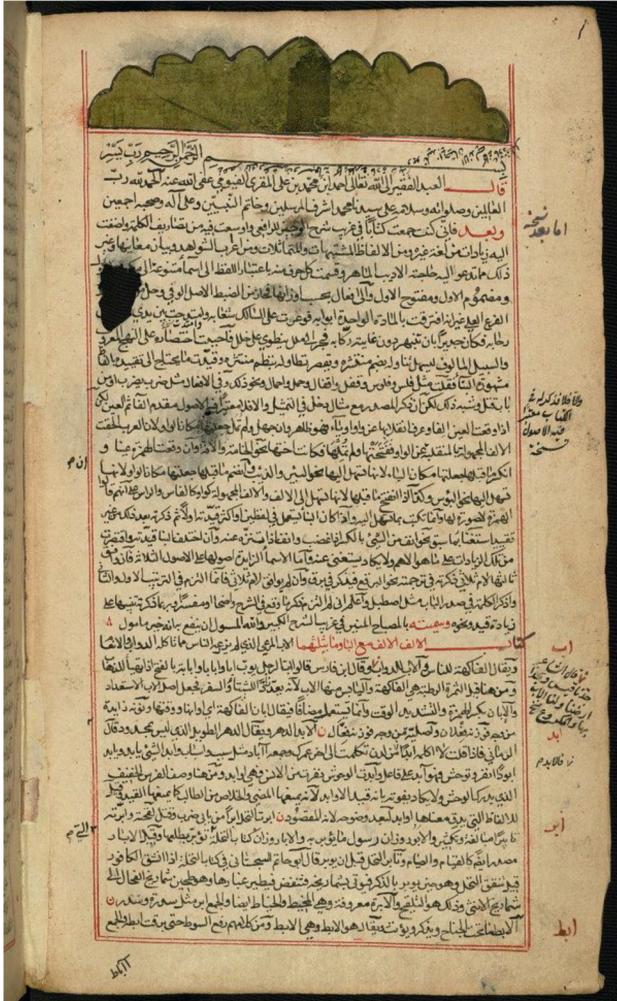
- Like atheism, philosophical naturalism denies the Divine and the supernatural.
- Philosophical naturalism is the view that:
 - There is no God.
 - All phenomena can be explained via physical processes.
 - There is no non-physical.
 - Rejects all supernatural claims.
 - There is nothing outside the universe.
 - If there is anything ‘outside’ the universe it does not interfere with it.

Most Atheists



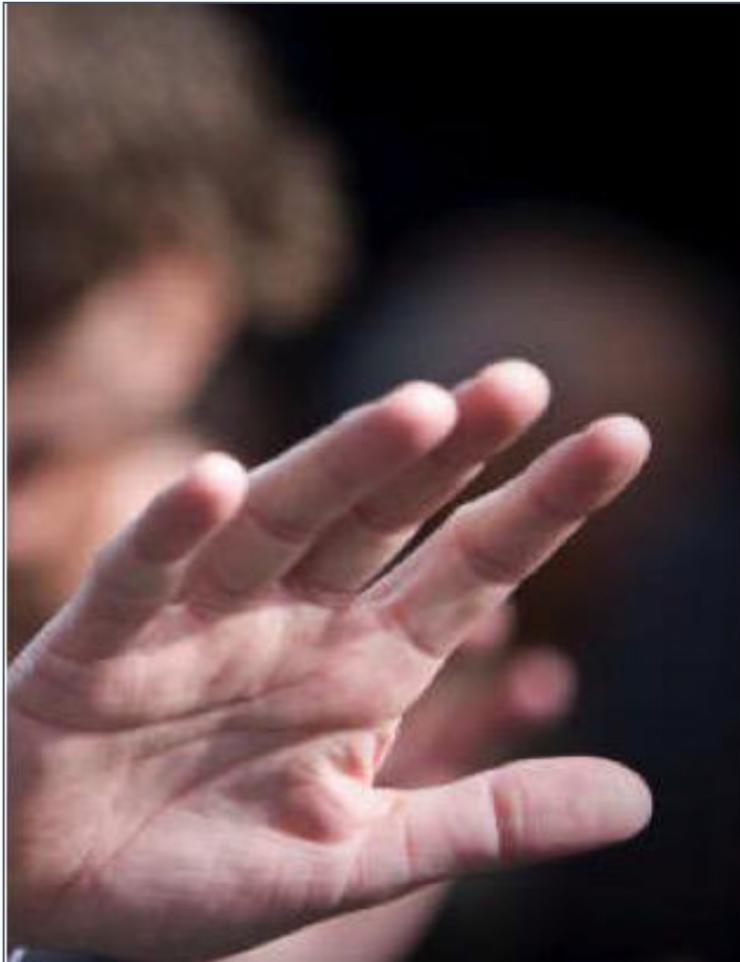
- According to Professor Richard Dawkins, atheists are philosophical naturalists:
 - “believes there is nothing beyond the natural, physical world”.
- However, some atheist academics are not naturalists. Although they deny the Divine, they affirm the existence of non-physical phenomena.
 - *For the theist, this type of atheism is - generally speaking - easier to intellectually engage with because they do not dismiss non-physical phenomena.*

Islamic Definition



- The traditional Islamic term for atheism is **الإلحاد**, which literally means ‘deviation’, best translated as ‘godlessness’.
- **لحد** **الإلحاد** comes from the word **لحد**.
- Linguistically, this implies that atheism is a deviation of what is natural and rational.
- The Prophet Muhammad صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ taught that all human beings are born with an innate nature.

Atheism = Shirk



- God's names include The-Creator (Al-Khaaliq) and The-Sustainer (Al-Muqeet), which atheists reject.
- Denying any of God's names and attributes is a form polytheism.
- The Qur'an affirms that those who reject a creator "are not certain"; those who reject monotheism are "fools", (i.e. implying they are irrational, imprudent and unwise.)
 - "And who would reject the faith of Abraham except a fool!" *The Qur'an, Chapter 2, Verse 130*

Why God's existence is self-evidently true



Preliminary Notes

- This is not an argument for God's existence.
- It is about the burden of proof and what is the default position.
- It will help you and the atheist realise that:
 - Atheists carry the burden of proof.
 - That there are self evident truths that we all believe to be true yet do not have evidence for them or cannot argue why they are true.
 - The Islamic theological position of the self evident nature of God, and the associated concept of the fitrah, is coherent.



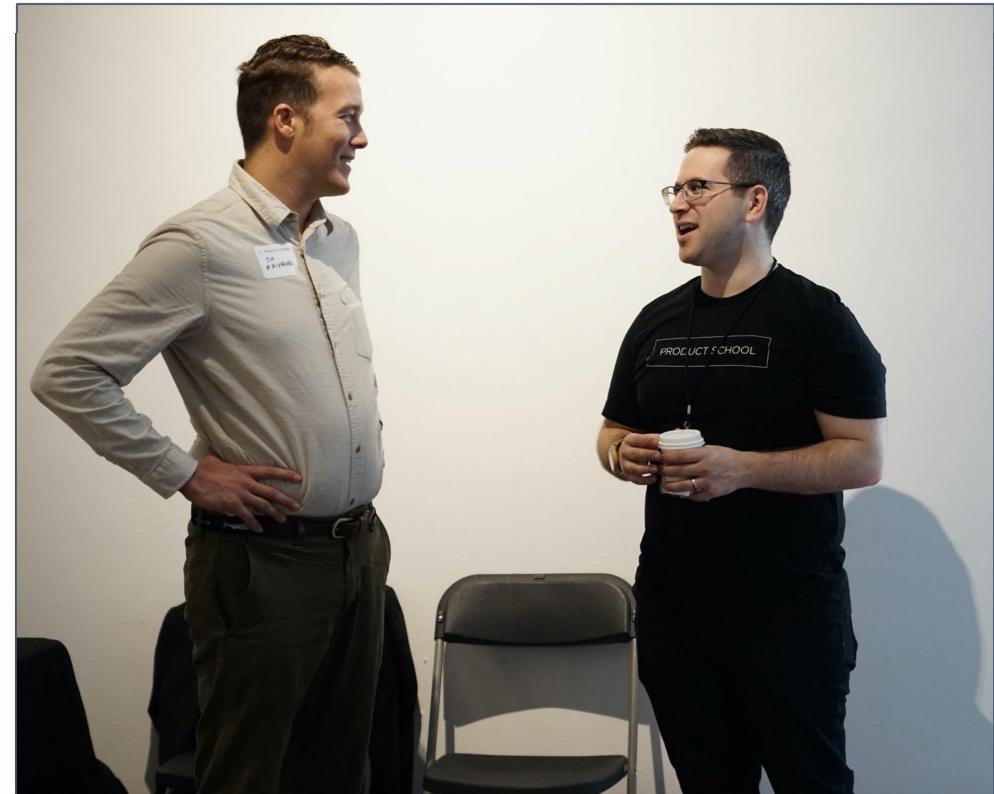
Consider this Scenario...



- Was my reaction rational?

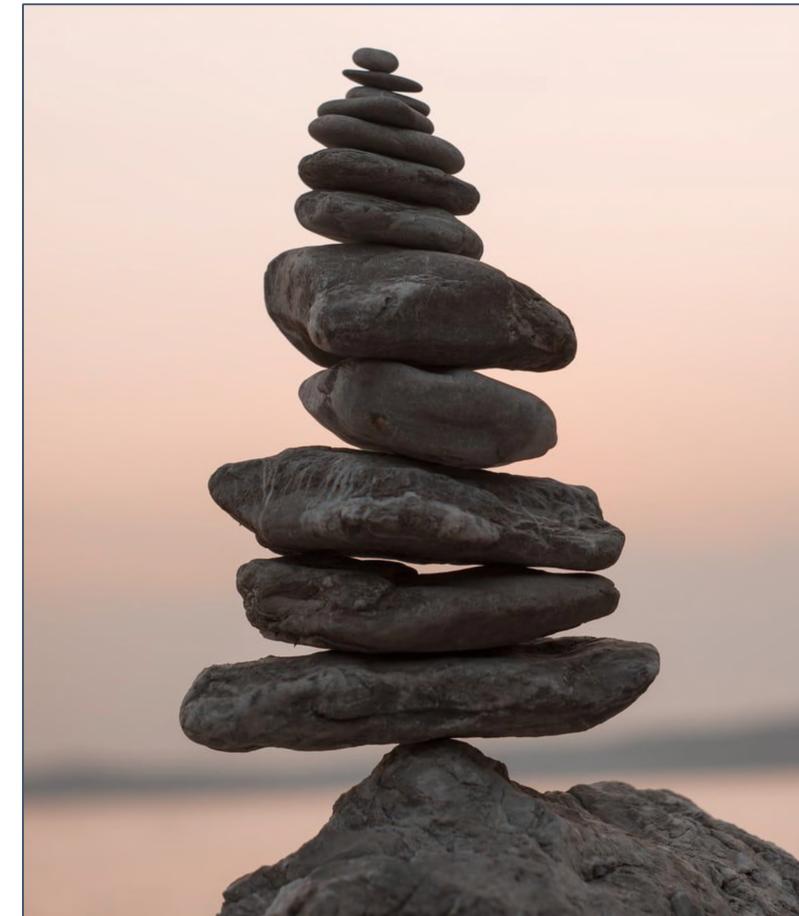
Theists vs. Atheist

- Discussion between Theist and Atheist:
 - What is the default position (and why):
 - “Prove God exists!” OR “What reasons do you have to reject His existence?”



Self-Evident Truths

- The belief that can be described as true by default.
 - Related to similar concepts known as axioms, first principles, philosophical assumptions and foundational truths.
- Many beliefs are considered as self-evidently true:
 - The uniformity of nature
 - The reality of the past
 - The validity of our reasoning
 - The existence of other minds
 - The existence of an external world
 - The existence of objective moral values



Self Evident Truths Can Be Wrong

- Self-evident truths are true by default.
- However, they can be wrong.
- Self-evident truths are to be accepted until we discover, empirically or philosophically, that they are false.



Onus of Proof

- When someone questions these truths, we do not blindly accept their conclusions.
- Usually reply with: “*what evidence do you have to reject them?*”
 - **The onus of proof is on the one making the claim**
 - Example: the reality of the past.



Characteristics of Self-Evident Truths

01	UNIVERSAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not a product of a specific culture or social conditions.• The belief that the past was once the present.
02	UNTAUGHT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not based on external information transfer.• Not acquired via information transfer external to your introspection and senses.
03	NATURAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Formed due to the natural functioning of the human psyche.
04	INTUITIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The simplest and most comprehensive interpretation of the world.

The Basic Idea of God

01	UNIVERSAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not the product of one culture. Cross cultural.• Not based on specific social conditions.
02	UNTAUGHT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Things that emerge requiring a creator or prior causal conditions is untaught.
03	NATURAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Formed by people with normal cognitive and psychological faculties.
04	INTUITIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Simple and comprehensive explanation for the universe.• The atheist raises more questions than it solves.

Supporting Studies

- “Finally, evidence from 6- to 10-year-olds suggests that children’s assignments of purpose to nature relate to their ideas concerning intentional nonhuman causation. Together, these research findings suggest that children’s explanatory approach may be accurately described as intuitive theism.”¹
- “Interestingly, comparisons across the different groups of non-religious participants in all three studies showed that, despite the absence of prominent theistic cultural discourse, non-religious Finnish participants were more likely than North American atheists to fail in suppressing their overall level of creation endorsement. This pattern of results shows that ambient theistic cultural discourse is therefore not the only factor that explains people’s tendency to endorse purposeful creation in nature.”²

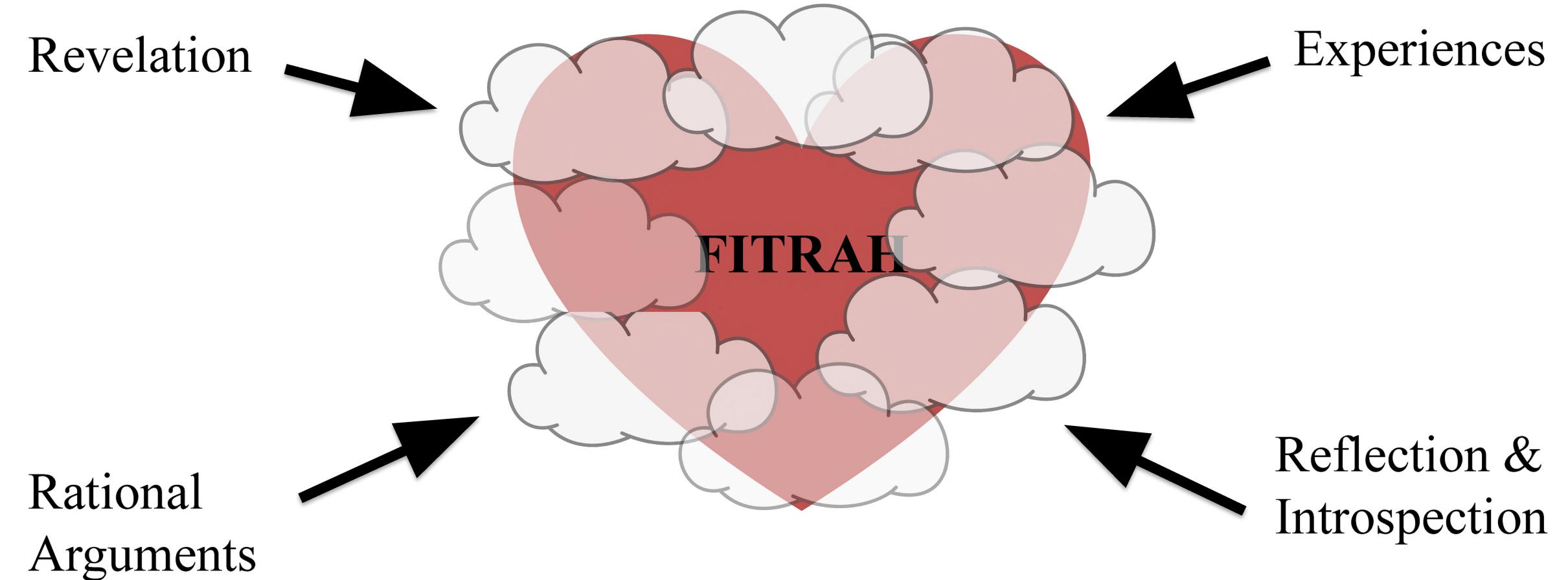


¹ Kelemen, D. (2004) Are Children “Intuitive Theists”? Reasoning About Purpose and Design in Nature. Psychological Science, 15(5), 295-301.) ² Järnefelt, E., Canfield, C. F. & Kelemen, D. (2015). The Divided Mind of a Disbeliever: Intuitive Beliefs About Nature as Purposefully Created Among Different Groups of Non-Religious Adults. Cognition 140:72-88.

It Makes Sense of the Fitrah

- The word comes from the Arabic triliteral stem fa-ṭa-ra (ف ط ر).
 - The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said, “every child is born in a state of fitrah. Then his parents make him a Jew, a Christian or a Magian...” *Sahih Muslim*
 - “Can there be any doubt about God, Creator of the heavens and Earth?” *The Qur ’an, Chapter 14, Verse 10*
 - “[Adhere to] the fitrah of Allah upon which He has created [all] people. No change should there be in the creation of Allah . That is the correct religion, but most of the people do not know.” *The Qur ’an, Chapter 30, Verse 30*
- Two main views:
 - The fitrah contains primary knowledge of:
 - God’s existence, that He deserves praise, and some basic morals.
 - The fitrah does not contain knowledge, rather it directs one towards the truth.

The “Clouded” Fitrah



Awakening the Truth With



Objection

- Atheism is universal and untaught, doesn't that make itself evidently truth?

The Implications of Life Without God



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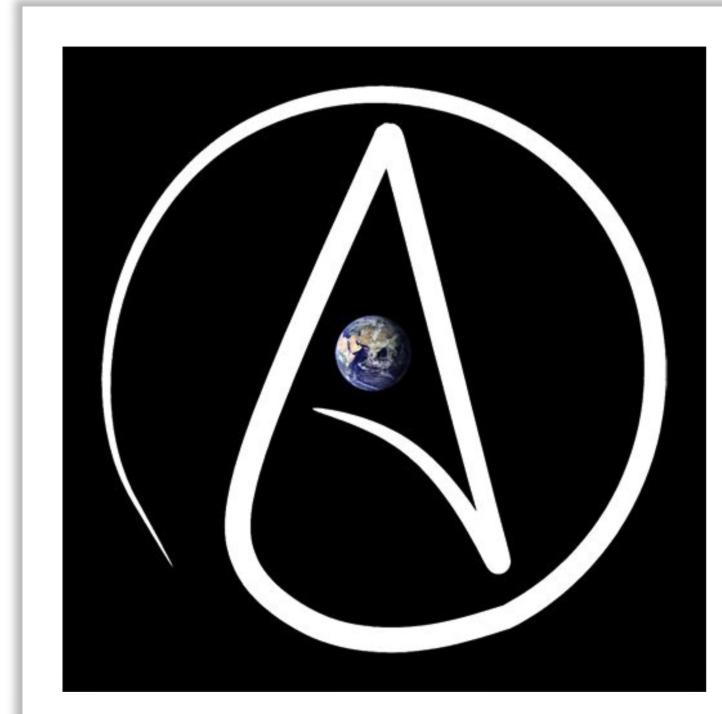
- Preliminary notes
- Atheism and philosophical naturalism
- The implications of atheism
 - No ultimate hope, justice, value, purpose or meaningful happiness
- Proposed solutions to the problem
- Islam as the solution

Preliminary notes

- This is not a rational or logical argument for God's existence.
- This is an existential perspective on the implications of life without God.
- It should provide the emotional and existential fertile ground for the arguments in this course to take root.
- It also shows how many of the things that many atheists take for granted or intuitively accept do NOT make sense under atheism.
 - *In fact, they will have to reject what makes them human or reject atheism.*
- This approach shows how Islam is the solution to the existential problems raised by atheism.

Atheism and philosophical naturalism

- Most atheists are philosophical naturalists.
- This is the view that there is no supernatural and that everything in the universe can be explained in reference to physical processes.
 - Physical processes are blind, cold and non-rational.
 - The world therefore is one big meaningless accident



The implications of atheism #1

No Ultimate Hope

- Hope: the feeling or expectation and desire for something to happen.
- Denying the hereafter renders hope meaningless:
 - Sick bed...
 - A life of suffering...
 - A life of ‘joy’...

**“Certainly no one despairs of Allah’s Mercy,
except the people who disbelieve.”**

The Qur ’an, Chapter 12, Verse 87



The implications of atheism #2

No Ultimate Justice

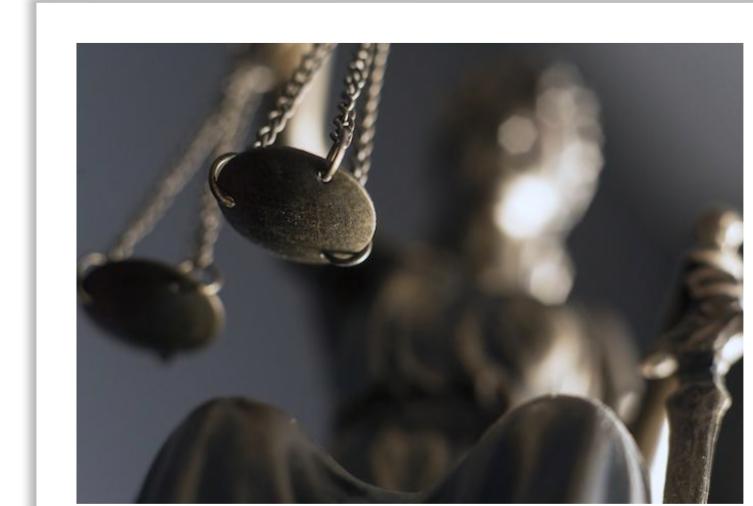
- Justice is an unachievable goal under atheism.
 - **Reflect:** An innocent Jewish lady in Nazi Germany during the 1940s...

“Allah created the heavens and the Earth for a true purpose: to reward each soul according to its deeds. They will not be wronged.”

The Qur'an, Chapter 45, Verse 22

“Allah 'Himself' is a Witness that there is no god 'worthy of worship' except Him—and so are the angels and people of knowledge. He is the Maintainer of justice. There is no god 'worthy of worship' except Him—the Almighty, All-Wise.”

The Quran, Chapter 3, Verse 18



The implications of atheism #3

No Ultimate Value for Human Life

- What is the difference between you and a 6 foot chocolate bunny?
- Human rights without God?
 - Can blind, nonconscious reality make sense of the min-independent nature of universe value or human rights?
 - “Nonsense upon stilts.” *Jeremy Bentham*

Schofield, P. (2003). Jeremy Bentham's 'Nonsense upon Stilts'. Utilitas, 15(1), 1-26.



“Now, indeed, We have conferred dignity on the children of Adam...and favoured them far above most of Our creation.”

The Qur'an, Chapter 17, Verse 70

The implications of atheism #5

No Meaningful Happiness

- Imagine you are sedated against your will. Suddenly, you wake up and find yourself on a plane...
- Meaningful vs. unmeaningful



“And a happy future belongs to those who are mindful of Him.”

The Qur'an, Chapter 7, Verse 128

The implications of atheism #4

No Ultimate Purpose

- Are we just a result of blind, random, non-rational, non-conscious, indifferent and cold physical processes?
- Claiming a purpose for our lives while affirming there is no ultimate reason for our existence is like saying:
 - “*Let's pretend to have purpose*”



“Our Lord! You have not created all this without purpose”

The Qur'an, Chapter 3, Verse 191

Proposed solutions



- “Let’s make up meaning and be responsible.” *John Paul Sartre*
- “Let’s just accept it and face it.” *Post-Modernist response.*
- “There is no meaning. Let’s find ways of ignoring the problem.” *Nihilism*
- “Let’s focus on the ‘meaning in Life’ as opposed to the meaning of life.” *New Atheists*
- “Let’s live in accordance with our biological drives. Pleasure is the key, the meaning of life is to enjoy life.” *Hedonism / Ethical Hedonism*

The reality

At the end of the day...

١٩

وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ نَسُوا اللَّهَ فَأَنْسَاهُمْ أَنفُسُهُمْ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ

“And do not be like those who forgot Allah, so He made them forget themselves. It is they who are ‘truly’ rebellious.”

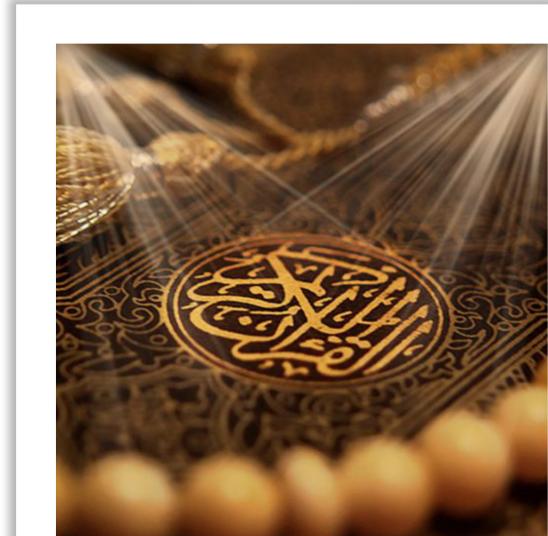
The Quran, Chapter 59, Verse 19

Forget here means... to pretend to forget, to deliberately force oneself to forget.

Islam as the solution

- Were heading towards a tipping point, people are waking up...
- Islam provides a comprehensive account of life:

- Ultimate justice
- Ultimate hope
- Ultimate value
- Purpose *of* and *in* life
- Meaningful and eternal happiness



- The entire message of the Qur'an revolves around a core theme which is the purpose of our existence...
 - “I did not create jinn and humans except to worship Me.” *The Quran, Chapter 51, Verse 56*

Islam Provides Meaning to Our Suffering



Islam comprehensively address all aspects of life

“ ‘He is the One’ Who created life and death in order to test which of you is best in deeds. And He is the Almighty, All-Forgiving.”

The Quran, Chapter 67, Verse 2

Divine Link

The Argument from Dependency for God's Existence



What we will cover

- A summary of the argument
- Defining ‘dependent’
- The argument
- The Islamic tradition
- Responding to 6 objections
- Ending on spiritual note
- Questions

Imagine this scenario...



A summary

- The universe and all that we perceive is either independent, dependent on something else dependent, or dependent on something independent and eternal.
- The universe and all that we perceive cannot be independent or dependent of something else dependent.
- Therefore, the universe and all that we perceive depends on something independent and eternal.

Defining Dependent

(Also referred to as contingent in philosophy)

#1 Not necessary

- Necessary means that it was impossible for it not to have existed.
- Things that are not necessary did not have to exist.



- There must be an external explanation that explains the existence of the pen on top of the egg box.
- It doesn't explain itself. There is nothing necessary about the pen being on top of the egg box.

#2 It's fundamental building blocks could have been arranged in a different way

- There is nothing necessary about that arrangement.
- There must have been something external to that thing that determined that specific arrangement.



- Imagine this arrangement of flower...
- It could have been a gust of wind or a gardener.

#3 It relies on something outside of itself for its existence

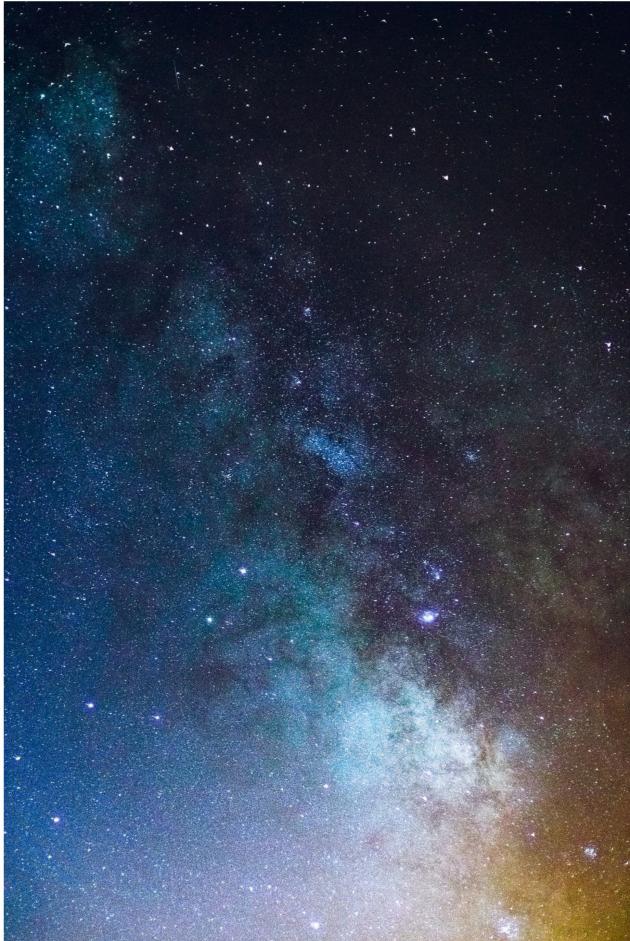
- This is a common sense and intuitive understanding of the word.
- Another way of explaining that something is dependent is by stating that it is not self-sustaining.



#4 It has limited physical qualities

- These can include having a certain shape, size, colour, temp, etc.
- This is because, if something has a limited physical feature, that feature has to be limited by something external to itself, such as an external source or external set of factors. It cannot give rise to its own limitations.
- The following questions highlight these point: *Why does it have these limits? Why is it not twice the size, or a different shape or colour?*

Apply this to the universe

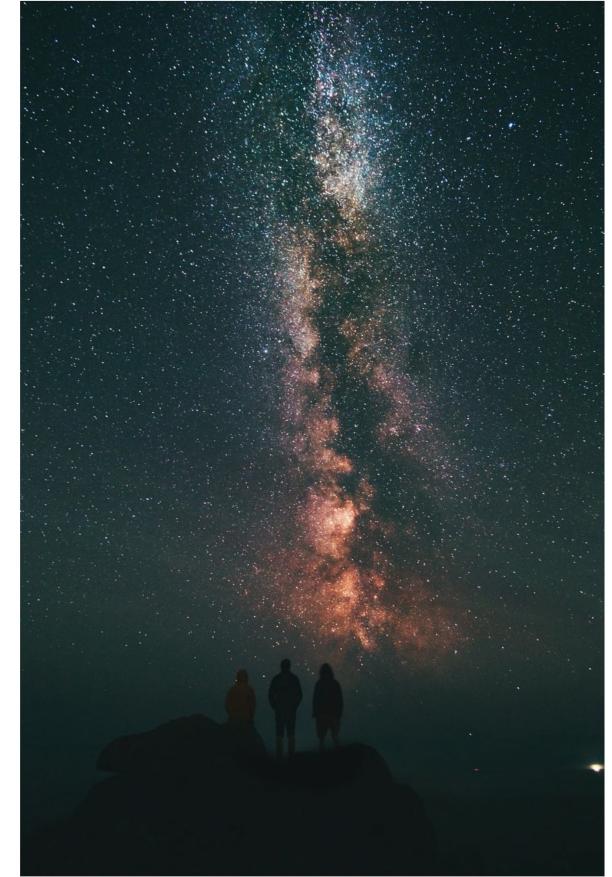


- The universe and everything we perceive do not necessarily exist. They could have not existed. Even scientists agree with this point.
- The fundamental building blocks of the universe and everything we perceive could have been arranged in a different way. Whether you consider these to be quarks or some type of quantum haze, the point is that they could have been arranged differently.
- The universe and everything we perceive have limited physical qualities. We can ask: *Why does do they have these limits? Why is it not twice the size?*

The Argument

The argument

1. The universe and all that we perceive are eternal, necessary and independent.
Is this possible?
2. The universe and all that we perceive depend for their existence on something else, which is also dependent.
Does this make sense?
3. The universe and all that we perceive depends for their existence on something else that exists by its own nature, and that is accordingly *eternal* and *independent*.
Rational explanation?



What if the universe was eternal?

- Even if the universe were eternal it would still be dependent.
 - Imagine there are an infinite number of human beings. Each human being was produced by the biological activity of their parents, and each of these parents were produced by the biological activity of their parents, *ad infinitum*.
 - *Wouldn't it still be perfectly reasonable to ask: why are there any human beings at all?*
 - *Wouldn't it be reasonable to say that if each human being is dependent, then the infinite chain is also dependent?*

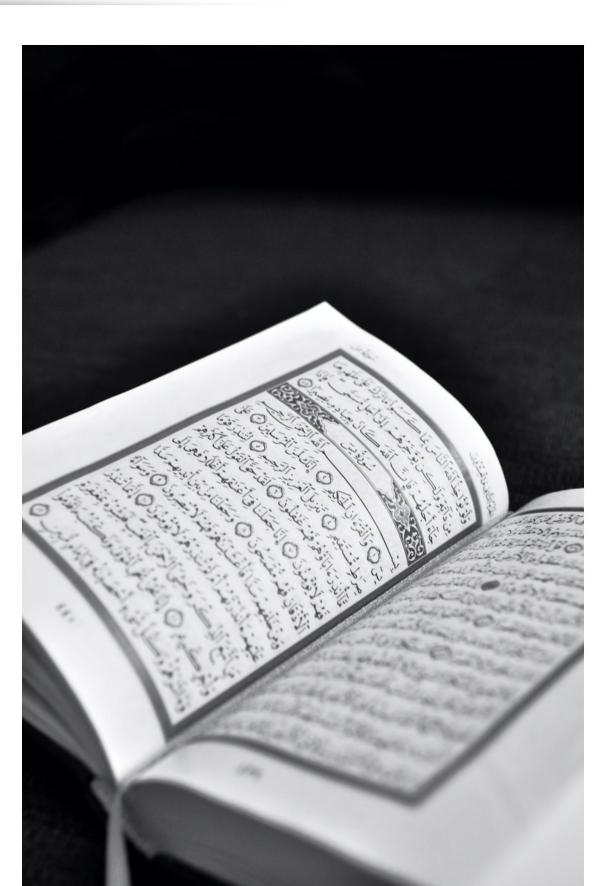
The rational conclusion

- All that we sense depends for its existence on something else that exists by its own nature and that is accordingly eternal and independent
 - *Independent*: because if it were dependent, it would require an explanation.
 - *Eternal*: because if it was not eternal (i.e. finite), it would be dependent, as finite things require an explanation for their existence.
 - Therefore, we can conclude that the universe, and everything that we perceive, depends upon something that is eternal and independent.
 - This is best explained by the existence of God.

The Islamic tradition

The Qur'an

- “God is independent of all that exists.” *The Qur'an, Chapter 3, Verse 97*
- “O mankind! It is you who stand in need of God, whereas He alone is self-sufficient, the One whom all praise is due.” *The Qur'an, Chapter 35, Verse 15*
- The classical exegete Ibn Kathir comments on the above verse:
 - “They need Him in all that they do, but He has no need of them at all... He is unique in His being free of all needs, and has no partner or associate.”¹



¹ Ibn Kathir, I. (1999). *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Adheem*. Edited by Saami As-Salaama. 2nd Edition. Riyadh: Dar Tayiba. Vol 6, p. 541.

What Else Can We Conclude?

This necessary being must be....

1. **All powerful:** The sum of all dependent things, including the universe (that contain immense power), are dependent upon Him. They derive their power and existence from Him. Therefore He is all powerful.
2. **Has a will:** The necessary being **chose** to bring everything dependent into existence, this ability to choose points to a will (*also see point 4*).
3. **One and alone:** If one were to argue for a multiplicity of necessary beings they must then differentiate between them, if there is no difference then there is only one (*refer to the argument from conceptual differentiation*).
4. **All knowing:** Every dependent thing is arranged in a particular way (with the possibility of other arrangements) to fit perfectly into the grand scheme of things. This shows that the necessary being behind all this is all knowing and wise. It also implies that this being has a will, because one particular arrangement was selected over another, which it means that this being chose a particular arrangement out of a possibility of many other arrangements.

Islamic theology



- Islam's intellectual tradition produced the like of Ibn Sina (known in the West as Avicenna), who articulated a similar argument.
 - He maintained that God is *Waajib al-Wujood*, necessarily existent.
 - Ibn Sina argued that God necessarily exists and He is responsible for the existence of everything.
 - Everything other than God is dependent, which Ibn Sina described as *Mumkin al-Wujud*.

Al-Ghazali

“There is no denying existence itself. Something must exist and anyone who says nothing exists at all makes a mockery of sense and necessity. The proposition that there is no denying being itself, then, is a necessary premise. Now this Being which has been admitted in principle is either necessary or contingent... What this means is that a being must be self-sufficient or dependent... From here we argue: If the being the existence of which is conceded be necessary, then the existence of a necessary Being is established. If, on the other hand, its existence is contingent, every contingent being depends on a necessary Being; for the meaning of its contingency is that its existence and non-existence are equally possible. Whatever has such a characteristic cannot have its existence selected for without a determining or selecting agent. This too is necessary. So from these necessary premises the existence of a necessary Being is established.”¹

¹ Al-Ghazali, M. (1964). *Fada'ih al-Batinyya*. Edited by Abdurahman Badawi. Kuwait: Muasassa Dar al-Kutub al-Thiqafa, p. 82.

Objection #1

The universe exists independently

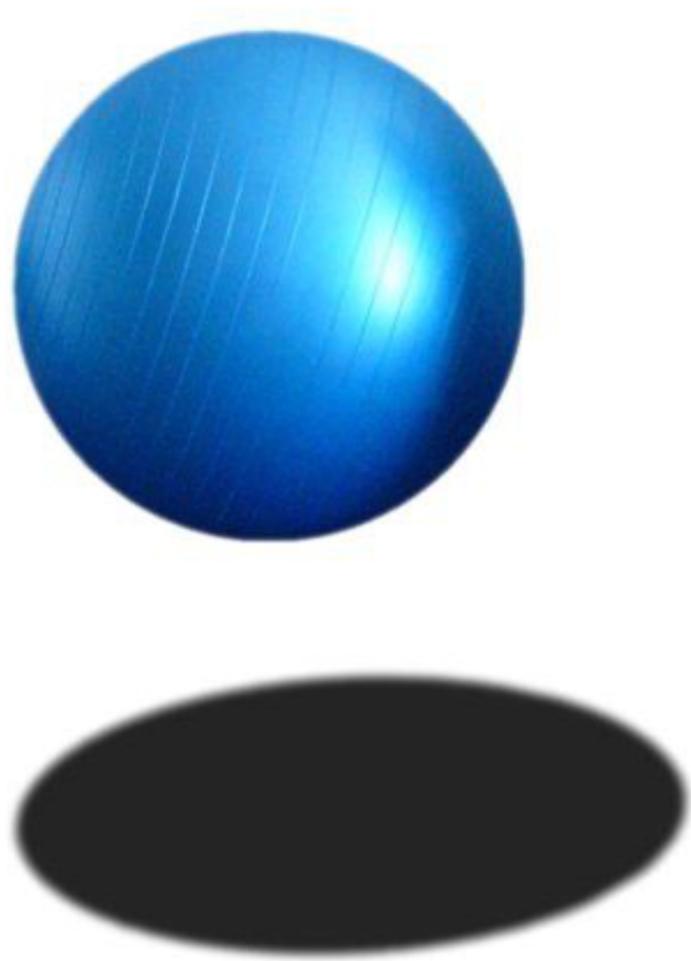
Not attentive to the argument

- A typical atheist contention is: *If we are saying that God is independent and necessary, why cannot we say the same thing for the universe?*
- This is a misplaced contention for the following reasons.
 - Firstly, there is nothing necessary about the universe; it could have not existed.
 - Secondly, the components of the universe could have been arranged in a different way. Whether one considers these components to be quarks or some type of quantum field, it still raises the question: *Why are they arranged the way that they are?* Since a different arrangement of quarks or fields could have existed instead of the collection that does exist, it follows that the universe is dependent.

Objection #2

The universe is a brute fact

Hovering blue ball...



Objection #3

Science will eventually find an answer

Scientific proof

- This is not a scientific argument, it is a metaphysical one.
- All that science can do is provide answers that will refer to phenomena that are dependent.
- Science cannot point to something that necessarily exists!

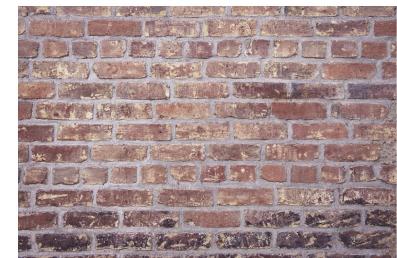


Objection #4

The fallacy of composition

Misplaced

- The fallacy of composition is a fallacy of reasoning that mistakenly concludes that the whole must have the same properties as its individual parts.
 - An objector may argue that the universe is not dependent even though it is made up of, or contains, dependent things.
 - However, making such a claim is not always fallacious. It could be that some wholes contain the properties that exist within its individual parts; however it is not always the case.
- This fallacy cannot be applied to the universe because of the principle of dependency:
 - Dependent parts make up dependent wholes.
- Example of the fallacy:
 - Persian rug...
- Example of no fallacy:
 - Brick wall...



Objection #5

You've assumed God's existence

Well known concepts in philosophy

- The argument has not made up the idea of necessity in order to lead to God.
- The dependency of the universe and everything that we perceive has led to the idea that there must be an eternal, independent being that exists necessarily.
 - This conclusion makes sense of the Islamic definition of God.
- The ideas of necessity and dependency are well known and discussed in philosophy (the use of the word dependency in this argument is usually referred to as contingency in philosophy).
 - They are not made up concepts to try and sneak the God explanation via the backdoor.

Objection #6

Doesn't God require an explanation?

Doesn't require an explanation

- The argument presented in this webinar has concluded that there must be an eternal, independent being that exists necessarily.
 - This makes sense of the Islamic conception of God.
- A necessary being doesn't require an explanation.
 - Technically, such a being doesn't require an explanation that refers to something external to it (unlike dependent things).
 - A necessary being is explained by virtue of its own existence. In other words, it was impossible for it to have not existed. Therefore, it doesn't require an explanation external to itself.

A Universe from Nothing?

The Qur'anic Argument for God Existence & oneness



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What We Will Cover

- Start with a thought experiment
- The Quranic argument
- Did the universe begin to exist?
- The logic of the argument
 - Did the universe come from nothing?
 - Did the universe create itself?
 - Was the universe created by something else created?
 - The universe was created by an uncreated creator
- Responses to objections
- Some striking attributes
- God is worthy of worship
- Questions

Imagine this scenario...



The Qur'an's Argument

- These verses function as a means to awaken the innate disposition.
- They provide the logical basis of a universal and powerful argument for the existence of God.

٢٥ أَمْ خُلِقُوا مِنْ غَيْرِ شَيْءٍ أَمْ هُمُ الْخَلِقُونَ
٢٦ أَمْ خَلَقُوا السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بَلْ لَا يُؤْقِنُونَ

**“Or were they created by nothing?
Or were they the creators (of themselves)?
Or did they create heavens and earth?
Rather, they are not certain.”**

The Qur'an, Chapter 52, Verses 35 and 36

Applies to Everything that Began

- “Or were they created (khuliqū) by nothing?”
 - Although the verse refers specifically to human beings, it can also be applied to anything that began to exist.
 - *khuliqū* means they were created, made, originated.



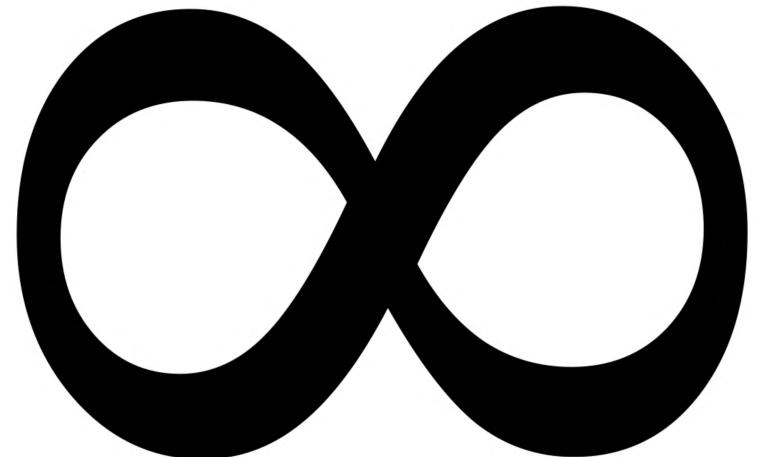
Did the Universe Begin to Exist?

- The impossibility of an actual infinite
- The universe and everything we perceive, including their fundamental building blocks, have limited physical qualities. Things with limited physical qualities are finite.
 - Finite things had a beginning.



Actual Infinite Doesn't Exist

- The actualised differentiated infinite does not exist.
 - The infinite made up of discrete physical parts.
- The undifferentiated infinite is coherent and can exist.
 - This is an infinite not made up of physical parts.
- Consider the following thought experiments:
 - An bag of an infinite number of balls...
 - A stack of an infinite number of cubes...
- Since the universe is made up of discrete physical parts. It cannot be infinite. It must be finite, therefore it has a beginning.

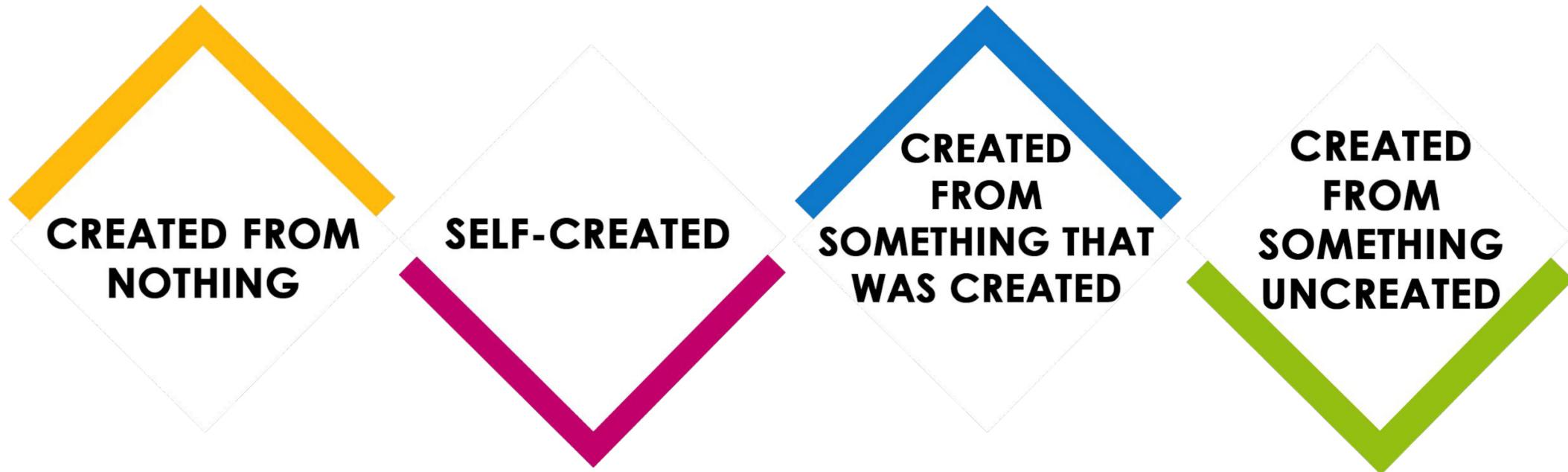


Limited Physical Qualities

- Things with limited physical qualities do not give rise to their own limitations.
- There must have been an external cause / explanation /set of factors that gave rise to their limitations.
- Therefore, they are finite and had a beginning.



The Logic



*“or were they created
by nothing?”*

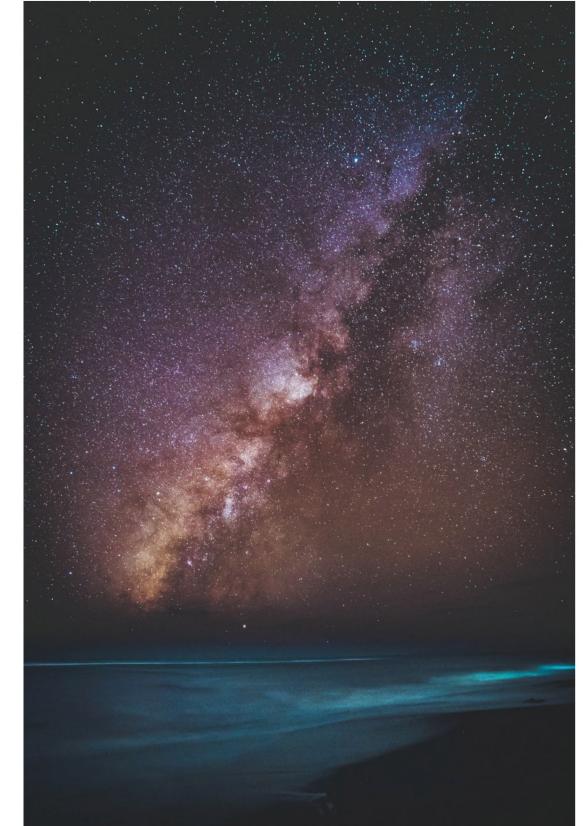
*“or were they the
creators of themselves?”*

*“or did they create the
heavens and the Earth?”*

*“Rather, they are not
certain”*

Nothing?

- What is nothing?
 - No prior causal conditions.
 - The absence of anything.
 - No potential.
 - No-thing.
- Can the universe come from nothing?
 - From nothing, nothing comes.
 - $0 + 0 + 0 = 0$
 - Logical implications and equivalents are absurd...



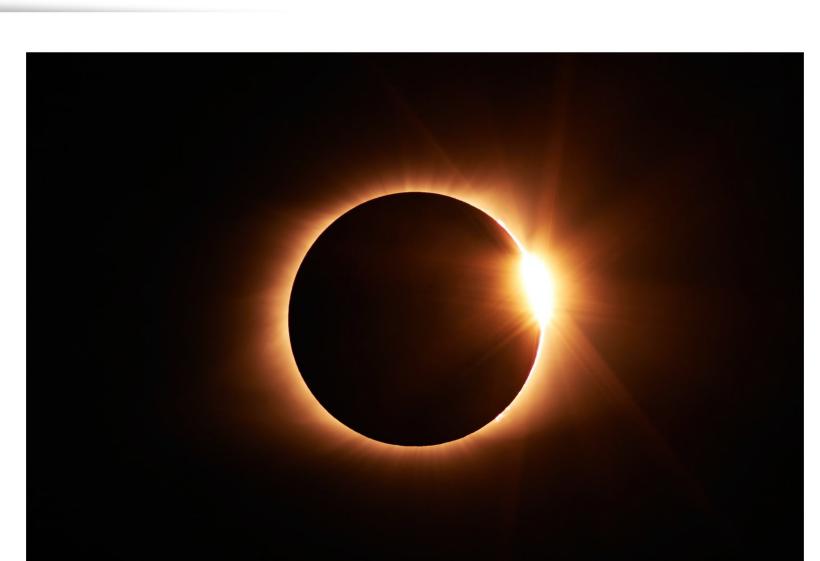
Main Objections

1. Does causality makes sense outside of the universe?
2. Things can come from nothing... quantum vacuum?
3. Does causality makes sense outside of “time”?
4. Lawrence Krauss’ “Nothing”?



God and Nothing

- Conflation between the theological nothing (meaning no material stuff) and philosophical nothing (no prior causal conditions).
- Something coming from nothing is impossible. Nothing implies non-being, no potential and no causal conditions.
- However, God is unique with the potential to create and bring things into existence (i.e. He provides causal activity) via His **will and power**.
 - Therefore, it is not the case of ‘something coming from nothing’. **God’s will and power were the causal conditions to bring the universe into existence.**

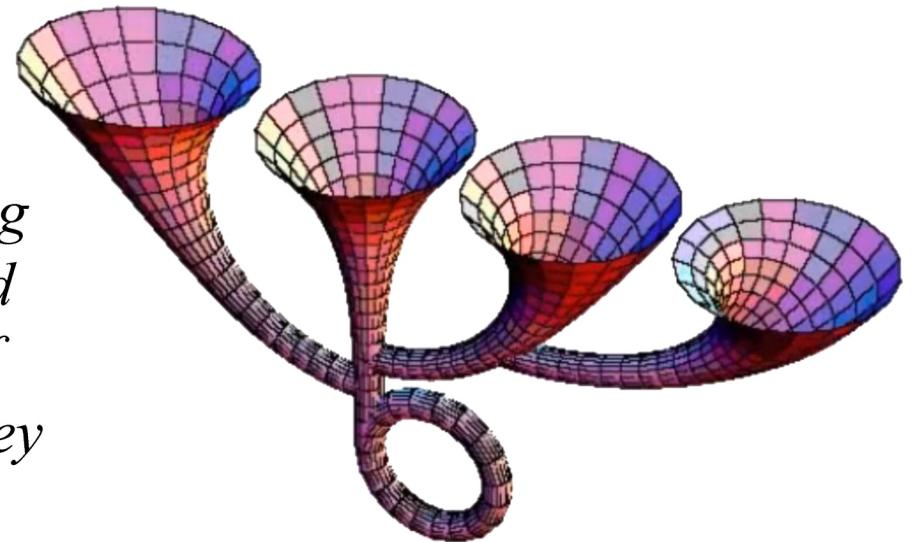


Self-Created?

- Can something exist and not exist at the same time?
- Can you mother give birth to herself?

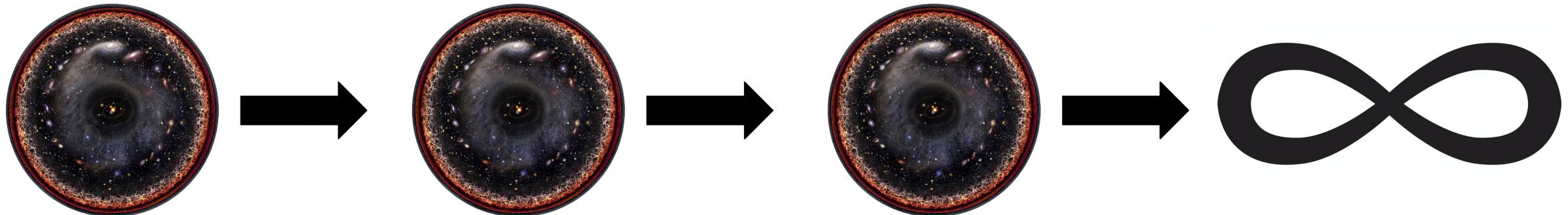
“This is even more fallacious argument, because if something does not exist, how can it be described as having power, and how could it create anything? How could it do anything? If these two arguments are refuted, then it is established that they have a creator, so let them believe in Him.”

Abu Sulaymaan al-Khattabi



Created by Something Else that Was Created?

- The absurdity of an infinite regress of causes.



Non-Existents



"There would be no series of actual causes, but only a series of non-existents... The fact, however, is that there are existents around us; therefore, their ultimate cause must be something other than temporal causes."

Shaykh Jaafar Idris

"The same can be said of the cause of the cause. Now this can either go on ad infinitum, which is absurd, or it will come to an end."

Al-Ghazali



Created by Something Uncreated

“He neither begets nor is born.”

The Qur'an, Chapter 112, Verse 3

“O God, You are the First, there is
nothing before You. You are the Last,
there is nothing after You.”

He is the first without a beginning, the last without any end.

Sahih Muslim

Conceptual Analysis

- Eternal
- Powerful
- Will
- Knowledge, Wisdom
- Transcendent
- One

Worthy of worship

- The uncreated creator gives something priceless that we do not earn, own nor deserve.
 - Every conscious moment of our existence.
 - We must direct ultimate gratitude to God.
 - Gratitude is key to worship:
 - “All perfect praise and gratitude belongs to the Lord of everything that exists.” *The Qur'an, Chapter 1, Verse 1*

Know God, Know Good

The Argument from Morality



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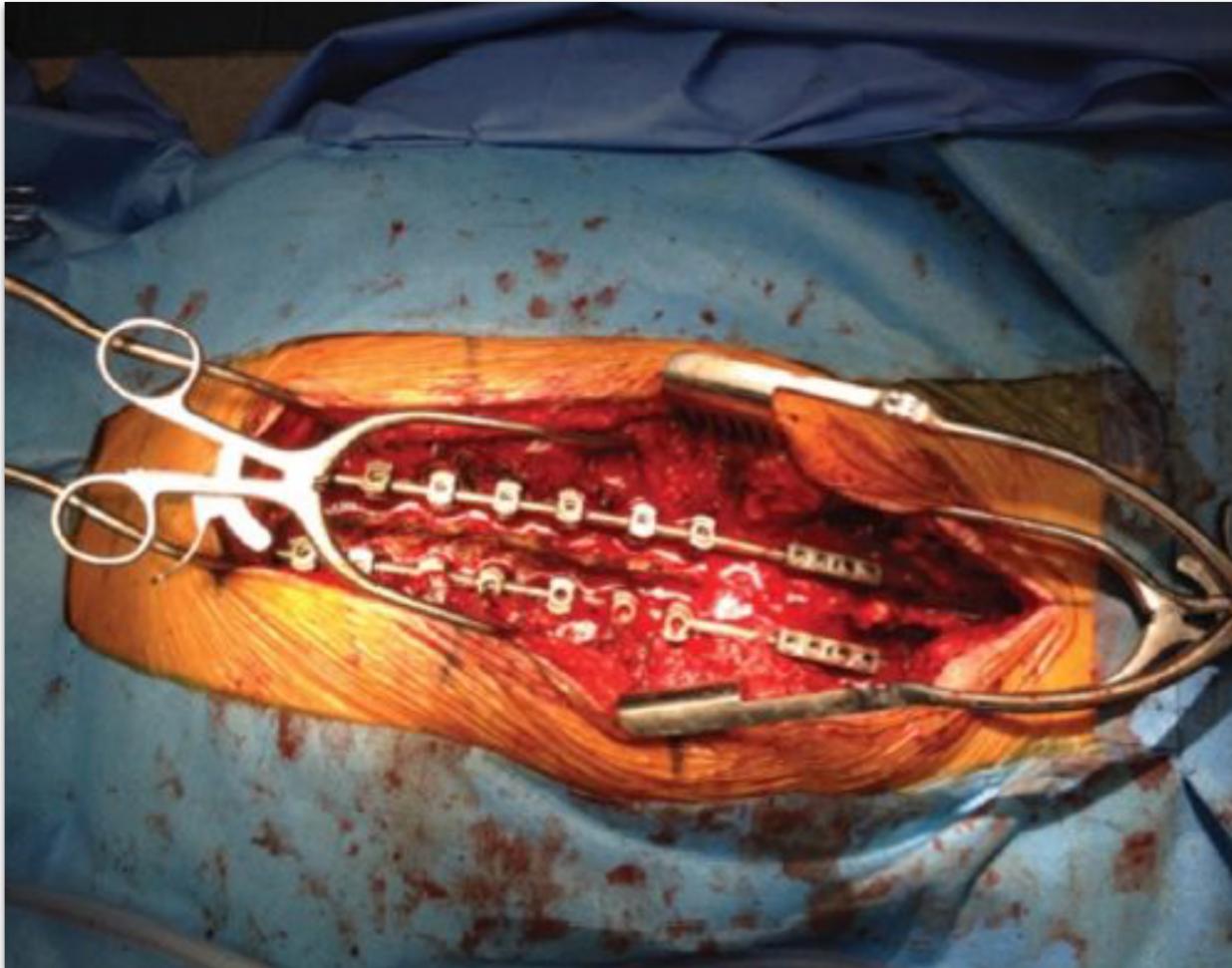
What we will cover

- Understanding key terms.
- The nature of objective morality.
- The argument from morality:
 - Objective moral values exist because God exists.
 - Possible alternatives:
 - Biology
 - Social consensus
 - Moral realism
- Euthyphro's dilemma
- Evolutionary moral realism (EMR)
 - Truth as a moral value is undermined by EMR
- Islamic perspectives on objective morality
- Implications for atheism
- *Al-Barr* and why God is worthy of worship

Some terms

- Meta-ethics (moral ontology):
 - Focuses on morality itself. It refers to the foundations, nature and scope of moral values. It tries to answer the following questions:
 - *Does morality exist? What kind of value is a moral value? Where do moral values come from? Why are moral values binding?*
 - Moral Realism:
 - moral properties are objective, in other words mind-independent.
 - Moral anti-realism:
 - moral properties are mind-dependent.
- Moral epistemology:
 - Focuses on what is moral. It aims to answer the question: *how do we know what is good and bad?*

Consider this...



Objective?

- Mind-independent.
 - Evolutionary moral realism: species independent.
- Morality is not dependent or based on one's mind or personal feelings.
 - Just like mathematical truths ($1+1=2$) or scientific truths (Earth going round the Sun) are true, regardless of what we feel about them.
- These morals are ‘outside’ ourselves. If so, the questions we need to answer are:
 - *Where did they come from? What explains their objective nature?*

Do we have proof?

- This issue is a metaphysical one, this means that we have to start with first principles to make sense of our philosophical intuitions and our perception of phenomena.
- Given our intuitions about the deliberate and unjustified snipping of a patient's spinal cord, we need to ground these intuitions.
 - *Why is snipping a patient's spinal cord in this way morally wrong regardless of personal feelings or opinions?*

An Islamic Perspective

- *Ashari* perspective:
 - Nothing in the real is considered objectively moral.
 - Focusses on God's omnipotence. God's commands are not subject to anything.
 - God can command theft to be good.
 - The human intellect cannot discover moral values independent of revelation.
- *Maturidi* perspective:
 - Like the *Ashari* position. The human intellect can discover some moral values independent of revelation. However, this would occur only by God creating that knowledge in the servant's intellect.
- *Athari* perspective:
 - There are some objective moral values in the real world.
 - The human intellect can discover these moral values.
 - God's power is subject to His will, which is a derivative of His nature.

Consider this...

- Is *shirk* being morally wrong (greatest sin; injustice) mind-independent?
 - If so, is it an arbitrary command to worship God alone? Or is there something about God's nature that makes *shirk* morally wrong?

“And, when Luqman said to his son while he was instructing him, ‘O my son, do not associate [anything] with God . Indeed, association [with him] is great injustice.’”

The Qur'an, Chapter 31, Verse 13

“It is truly I. I am God! There is no god 'worthy of worship' except Me. So worship Me 'alone', and establish prayer for My remembrance.”

The Qur'an, Chapter 20, Verse 14

An Argument for God

- If objective morals exist, God must exist.
- Objective morals exist.
- Therefore, God exists.

Why?

- The morals that we consider to be objective are so because God exists.
 - God provides this foundation because He is external to the universe and transcends human subjectivity.
 - He is the objective source. His commands are not subjective from the point of view that they are based on any limitation.
 - Professor Ian Markham explains:
 - “God explains the mysterious “ought” pressing down our lives; and God explains the universal nature of the moral claim. As God is outside the world, God the creator can be both external and make universal commands.”

Islamic Perspective

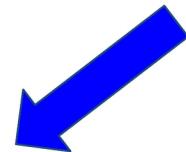
- God is maximally perfect:
 - He is maximally knowledgeable, powerful and good.
 - Perfect goodness is God's essential nature (*al-Barr*).
 - When God makes a moral command, it is a derivative of His will, and His will does not contradict His nature. Therefore, what God commands is good because He is good, and He defines what good is.

“Say, ‘Indeed, God does not order immorality.’”

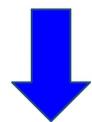
The Qur'an, Chapter 7, Verse 28

Euthyphro's Dilemma

Is something morally good because God commands it, or does God command it because it is morally good?

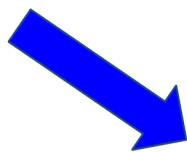


If morality is defined by God's commands...

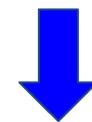


Good and evil are arbitrary because God could command anything. There is nothing in the real world that would be considered objectively wrong.

ARBITRARINESS HORN



If morality is external to God's commands...



Moral standards are completely outside and independent of God's essence and nature. Therefore God is not required for objective morals.

INDEPENDENT STANDARD HORN

Response

- There is a third possibility: God is good.
 - “There is a third alternative: a morally stable God of the kind found in scripture, a supreme being who would not arbitrarily change his mind about the goodness of compassion and the evil of sexual misconduct. Such a God always commands good because his character and nature are good.” *Professor of Philosophy Shabbir Akhtar, The Qur'an and the Secular Mind*

Response Further Explained

- There is indeed a moral standard, but unlike what the second horn suggests, it is not external to God. Rather, it follows necessarily from God's nature.
 - His nature contains within it the perfect, non-arbitrary, moral standard. This means that an individual's actions (i.e. the killing of innocents) is not arbitrarily bad, because it follows from an objective, necessary, moral standard.
 - On the other hand, it does not mean God is somehow subservient to this standard because it is contained in His nature. It defines His nature; it is not in any way external to Him.
- A natural response: "*You must know what good is to define God as good, and therefore you haven't solved the problem.*"
 - Simple reply: "God defines what good is. He is the only Being worthy of worship because He is the most perfect and moral Being."

Are there any alternatives?

- Biology
- Social Pressure
- Moral Realism

Biology

- “If men were reared under precisely the same conditions as hive-bees, there can hardly be a doubt that our unmarried females would, like the worker-bees, think it a sacred duty to kill their brothers, and mothers would strive to kill their fertile daughters, and no one would think of interfering.” *Charles Darwin*
- No moral meaning.
- Not species/mind independent.
- Subject to biological conditions that shaped the evolution of our species.

Social pressure: Uyghur Genocide



- Torture death camps
- Genocide
- Systematic attempt destroy Uyghur culture
- Mass sterilization, forced abortions and mandatory birth control part

Moral realism

- What does it mean that objective moral values “just exist”?
- The ontological questions we raise in the beginning are not answered:
 - *Where did they come from? What explains their objective nature?*
- Morality is not limited to recognizing the truth of compassion or justice. Morality entails a sense of duty or obligation; we are obligated to be compassionate and just.
- Under moral realism such obligations are impossible, because recognising that a certain moral truth is objective does nothing to ensure that we are obligated to implement that moral truth.
- Moral duties are owed. However, owned to whom?

Absolute vs. Objective

“There are certain situations where killing becomes morally permissible, such as defending one’s self and family. Therefore, nothing is objectively evil.”

- This conflates absolute morality with objective morality; they are very different.
 - Absolute morality entails that a moral act is good or bad regardless of the given situation.
 - Objective morality, however, readily acknowledges the context-sensitivity of some moral facts.
 - An objective moral fact might be killing human beings without appropriate justification is wrong. The context-sensitive nature of this moral claim includes an important caveat that the killing must also be unjustified.

Rejecting Objectivity

- The argument thus far would not work. However, it's a double edged sword for that individual!
 - Denying objective morals means they have no right to point the finger at religion (more specifically Islam) in any objective way.
 - He or she cannot even point the finger at the KKK, ISIS or even the dictatorship of North Korea! They should put a caveat to all of their moral judgments and simply say, “This is my subjective view.”
 - Doing this renders their moral disagreements or outrage pointless.
- That said, deep down inside, most sane human beings do not deny the objectivity of some basic morals, such as murder, theft and abuse.

Moral Epistemology

- How do we know what is good?
 - The ontological basis for objective morals are God's commands.
 - Therefore, finding out what His commands are will facilitate moral knowledge.
- Islamic principles:
 - **God knows, we don't:** “And it may be that you dislike a thing which is good for you and that you like a thing which is bad for you. Allah knows but you do not know.” *The Qur'an, Chapter 2, Verse 216*
 - **Sources of revelation:**
 - Qur'an and Prophetic Traditions
 - Preserving of religion, life, wealth, mind, offspring and honour.

Is God Merciful?

Islam's Response to the Problem of Evil & Suffering



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What we will cover

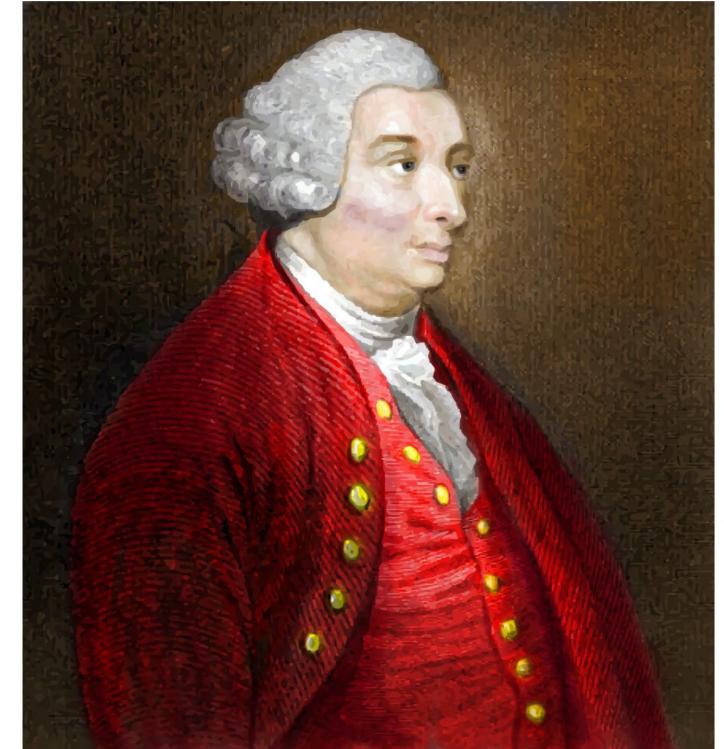
1. The problem of evil and suffering
 - a. The logical form
 - b. The evidential argument
2. Islam's response to the problem
 - a. Daring assumptions
 - b. Spiritual, emotional and existential tools
 - c. A note on egocentrism
3. Transcending evil and suffering
4. The best of possible worlds?
5. “I didn’t ask for this life or test”
6. Questions



David Hume

“Epicurus’s old questions are yet unanswered. Is He willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then He is impotent. Is He able, but not willing? Then He is malevolent. Is He both able and willing? Whence then is evil?”

David Hume, Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion



The logical form

The logical form tries to show a logical impossibility in the coexistence of God and evil.

“Evil is a problem, for the theist, in that a contradiction is involved in the fact of evil on the one hand and belief in the omnipotence and omniscience of God on the other.”

McCloskey, H. J. 1960. “God and Evil.” Philosophical Quarterly 10: 97-114.



It doesn't necessarily follow

1. If God exists, then God is all good, all powerful, and all knowing and allows there to be evil in the world.
 2. If God is all good, then he would want to eliminate evil.
 3. If God is all powerful, then he can eliminate evil.
 4. If God is all knowing, then he is aware of any evil that exists.
- C. **Therefore, God does not exist.**

Does this logically follow?

There seems to be a missing premise:

5. *If there is a being that knows about all evil, wants to eliminate evil, and is able to eliminate all evil, then that being would not allow there to be any evil in the world.*

- This claim is postulating some form of **logical necessity**.

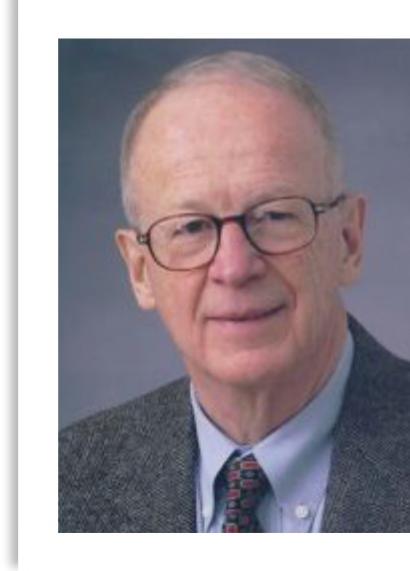
Mere possibility

- All the theist needs in response to the logical problem of evil is a defense, a possibility of God existing and permitting evil.
 - Thus, the theist here need not say exactly why a given evil was permitted, but instead can merely try to show it is possible there is a reason.
- There is a possibility by virtue of understanding God's nature.
 - He is The-Wise. There can be wisdom (a reason) behind evil and suffering.



The evidential form

1. There exist instances of intense suffering which an omnipotent, omniscient being could have prevented without thereby losing some greater good or permitting some evil equally bad or worse.
2. An omniscient, wholly good being would prevent the occurrence of any intense suffering it could unless it could not do so without thereby losing some greater good or permitting some evil equally bad or worse.
3. [Therefore] There does not exist an omnipotent, omniscient, wholly good being.



IX. THE PROBLEM OF EVIL AND SOME VARIETIES OF ATHEISM

WILLIAM L. ROWE

THIS paper is concerned with three interrelated questions. The first is: Is there an argument for atheism based on the existence of evil that may rationally justify someone in being an atheist?¹ To this first question I give an affirmative answer and try to support that answer by setting forth a strong argument for atheism based on the existence of evil.² The second question is: How can the theist best defend his position against the argument for atheism based on the existence of evil?³ In response to this question I try to describe what may be an adequate rational defense for theism against any argument for atheism based on the existence of evil. The final question is: What position should the informed atheist take concerning the rationality of theistic belief? Three different answers an atheist may give to this question serve to distinguish three varieties of atheism: unfriendly atheism, indifferent atheism, and friendly atheism. In the final part of the paper I discuss and defend the position of friendly atheism.

Before we consider the argument from evil, we need to distinguish a narrow and a broad sense of the terms "theist," "atheist," and "agnostic." By a "theist" in the narrow sense I mean someone who believes in the existence of an omnipotent, omniscient, eternal, supremely good being who created the world. By a "theist" in the broad sense I mean

I

In developing the argument for atheism based on the existence of evil, it will be useful to focus on some particular evil that our world contains in considerable abundance. Intense human and animal suffering, for example, occurs daily and in great plenitude in our world. Such intense suffering is a clear case of evil. Of course, if the intense suffering leads to some greater good, a good we could not have obtained without undergoing the suffering in question, we might conclude that the suffering is justified, but it remains an evil nevertheless. For we must not confuse the intense suffering in and of itself with the good things to which it sometimes leads or of which it may be a necessary part. Intense human or animal suffering is in itself bad, an evil, even though it may

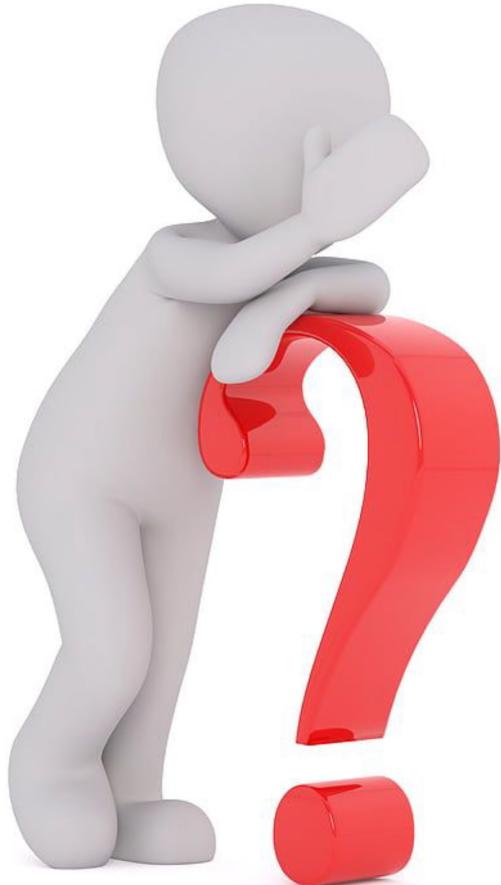
William Rowe, "The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism," American Philosophical Quarterly 16, no. 4 (1979): 335–41

It is a valid argument... but premise 1 is false

- Why?
 - God is not only omniscient (all knowing), omnipotent (all powerful) and wholly good.
 - God is also the wise.
 - Falsely assumes being able to comprehend all of God's knowledge.
 - God has the picture, we have a pixel (if that!)
 - Assumes God hasn't given us any good reasons for the suffering and evil in the world.
- Therefore premise 1 is based on three daring assumptions...



3 Daring assumptions



1. False assumption of describing God as only wholly good, all knowing and all powerful.
2. Falsely assumes being able to comprehend God's knowledge and wisdom.
3. Falsely assumes God has not given us any good reasons why He has permitted evil and suffering.

False Assumptions #1 & 2

God is only wholly good, all knowing
and all powerful & falsely assumes
being able to comprehend God's
knowledge and wisdom.



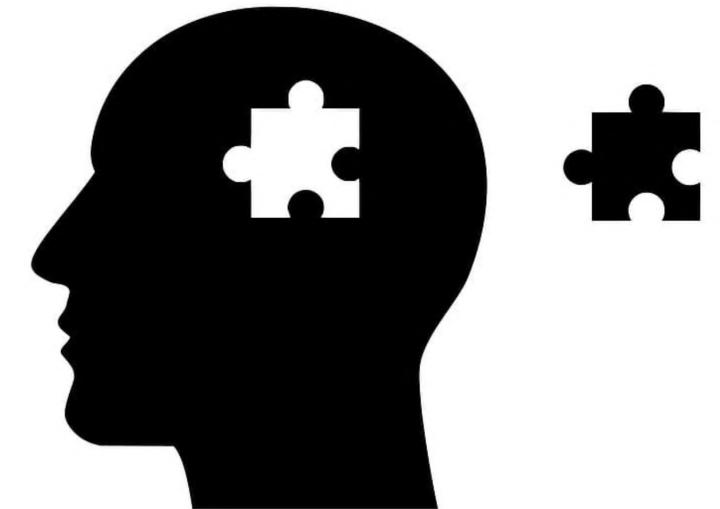
Misrepresents Islamic conception

- Misrepresentation of the Islamic conception of God.
 - Straw man fallacy.
- Abstracts goodness and power away from God other names and attributes:
 - There are other names and tributes such as **The Wise (al-Hakeem)**.
 - Islamic theology understand all of God's names and attributes via His Oneness. There is no abstraction.
- If God is **The Wise**, there is wisdom behind the perceived evil.
 - Wisdom = Reasons.



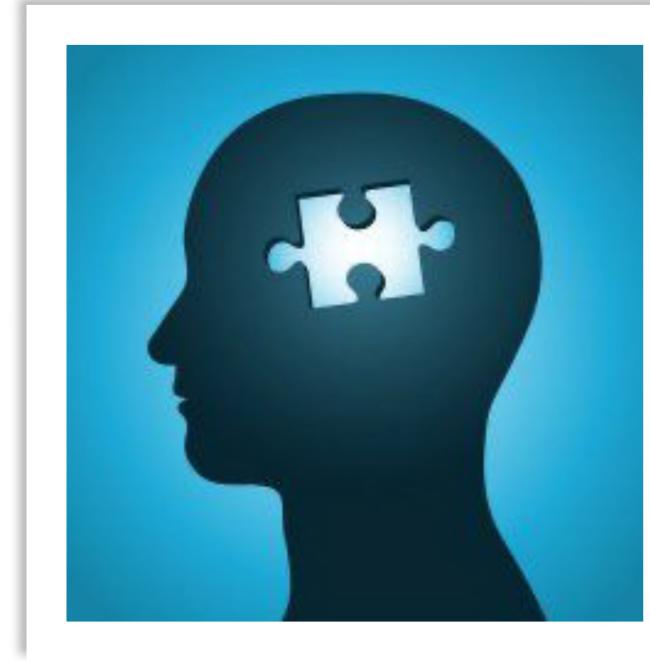
What wisdom?

- Argument from ignorance: *argumentum ad ignoratiū*.
- Just because the wisdom cannot be seen or understood it doesn't mean there is no wisdom.
- It is not a “cop-out”. We refer to and submit to unknown wisdom (reasons) all the time.
 - Epistemology of testimony, etc.



We have epistemic limitations

- God's wisdom and knowledge is maximally perfect.
- We have epistemic limitations.
- We cannot know everything or comprehend all of the reasons.
- It is fallacious to assume that we have the full picture.



Moses and Khidr

**The Qur'an,
Chapter 18,
Verses 65 to 82**

Listen to the story...

Foreknowledge and wisdom

“Indeed, you will not be able to have patience with me!”:

- “You will not be able to accompany with me when you see me doing things that go against your law, because **I have knowledge from God that He has not taught you**, and you have knowledge from God that He has not taught me.”

- “For I know that you will denounce me justifiably, but **I have knowledge of God’s wisdom and the hidden interests** which I can see but you cannot.”

God knows and we Don't

‘And when your Lord said to the angels, “Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority.” They said, “Will You place upon it one who causes corruption therein and sheds blood, while we declare Your praise and sanctify You?” God said, “Indeed, I know that which you do not know.”’

The Qur'an, Chapter 2, Verse 30

Foreknowledge and wisdom

“I know that which you do not know”:

- “I know that the benefit of creating this type of creature outweighs the harm that you mentioned, that which you have no knowledge of.”
- “I will create among them Prophets and send Messengers. I will also create among them truthful, martyrs, righteous believers, worshippers, the modest, the pious, the scholars who implement their knowledge, humble people and those who love God and follow His Messengers.”

Profound wise purpose

“We made good everything He created.” *The Qur'an, Chapter 32, Verse 7*

- “If God – exalted is He – is Creator of everything, He creates good (*khayr*) and evil (*sharr*) on account of the wise purpose that He has in that by virtue of which His action is good (*hasan*) and perfect (*mutqin*)...God is Creator of illnesses, aches, hateful odours, ugly forms and noxious bodies like snakes and human excrement on account of a profound wise purpose in them.” *Ibn Taymiyya*

God does not create pure evil

“God does not create pure evil. Rather, in everything that He creates is a wise purpose by virtue of what is good. However, there may be some evil in it for some people, and this is partial, relative evil. As for total evil or absolute evil, the Lord is exonerated of that.”

Ibn Taymiyya

False Assumption #3

God has not given us any good
reasons why He has permitted evil
and suffering.



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Life is a test

“He who created death and life to test you as to which of you is best in deed - and He is the Exalted in Might, the Forgiving.”

The Qur'an, Chapter 67, Verse 2

Our purpose

“And I did not create the jinn and mankind
except to worship Me.”

The Qur'an, Chapter 51, Verse 56

Knowing God

- E.g. *Al-Wali*: The Governor, The Protector

2nd order good

- 1st order good is physical pleasure and happiness and 1st order evil is physical pain and sadness.
- 2nd order goodness is elevated goodness such as courage, and it can only happen if suffering or evil exist.

Free will

- God has given us free will, and free will includes choosing evil acts. Without free will “good” and “evil” are meaningless.
 - This explains personal evil.

Future sins

- People can also suffer from past, present or future sins. God has knowledge of everything which is not contingent on time.

Detachment from the dunya

- According to the Islamic tradition God has created us so that we may worship and draw near to Him.
 - A fundamental principle concerning this is that we must detach ourselves from the ephemeral nature of the world.
 - Suffering shows us how truly low the dunyā is, thereby facilitating our detachment from it. Thus we are able to draw closer to God.
 - The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was reported to have said that, “Love of the dunyā is the root of all evil.”

It is a hadith in Bayhaqi's Shu 'ab al-Iman, traced back to al-Hasan al-Basri, who ascribes it to the Prophet, peace and blessings of God be upon him. The vast majority of the narrations from al-Hasan are considered authentic.

Spiritual, emotional and existential tools



Purifying hearts

“So that God might test what is in your breasts and purify what is in your hearts. And God is Knowing of that within the breasts.”

The Qur'an, Chapter 3, Verse 154

Relief and paradise

“Surely with every difficulty there is relief.
Surely with every difficulty there is relief.”

The Qur'an, Chapter 94, Verse 5 and 6

“Anyone who dies of the plague is a martyr.
Anyone who dies of a stomach illness is a martyr.
Anyone who drowns is a martyr.”

Sahih Muslim

It's all good!

“Amazing is the affair of the believer, verily all of his affair is good and this is not for no one except the believer. If something of good/happiness befalls him he is grateful and that is good for him. If something of harm befalls him he is patient and that is good for him.”

Sahih Muslim

Expiation of sins

“No calamity befalls a Muslim but that God expiates some of his sins because of it, even though it were the prick he receives from a thorn.”

Sahih Al-Bukhari

Entering paradise

“Do you think that you will enter paradise without any trials while you have known the examples of those who passed away before you? They were afflicted with suffering and adversity and were so violently shaken up that even the Prophet and the believers with him cried out: ‘When will God’s help come?’ Be aware, God’s help is close.”

The Qur'an, Chapter 2, Verse 214

Suffering is temporary

- All believers who suffered will be granted eternal bliss, and all the suffering they had – even if they suffered all of their life – would be forgotten forever.
 - The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said, “*Then the person who had suffered the most affliction in the world of those destined for Paradise will be brought forth and merely dipped into Paradise for a moment. Then he will be asked ‘O son of Adam, have you ever seen suffering? Have you ever experienced hardship in your life?’ He will reply ‘No my Lord, by God. I have never undergone suffering. I have never seen hardship.’” Sahih Muslim*

The bad ≠ good

Say “Bad cannot be likened to good, though you may be dazzled by how abundant the bad is. Be mindful of God, people of understanding, so that you may prosper.”

The Qur'an, Chapter 5, Verse 100

To confirm God's revelation

“Each time the servant increases in knowledge and faith, some of God’s wisdom and His mercy will appear to him that will dazzle his intellect. This will make evident to him to count as true that about which God has informed in His book, ‘We will show them Our signs on the horizons and in themselves until it becomes evident to them that He is the Real’ (41:53).”

Ibn Taymiyya, Irada

God's wise purpose

“God is essentially providence. Evil is without real existence in the world. All that God has willed can only conform to a sovereign justice and an infinite goodness, provided, however, that it is envisaged from the point of view of the totality and not from that of the fragmentary and imperfect knowledge that His creatures have of reality...”

Henri Laoust, summarising Ibn Taymiyya's position

Evil is not attributed to God

- “Hence, evil is not attributed to God in any respect. Even if God is the Creator of the servant’ acts – His creation of obedient acts is blessing and mercy, and He has a wise purpose and mercy in His creation of evil deeds – this is nonetheless just of Him.”
Ibn Taymiyya, Hasana

- Remember the story of Musa and Khidr? Khidr attributed the perceived wrong to himself and the wisdom behind his actions to God.

A Note on Egocentrism



Cognitive bias

- Some atheists suffer from a veiled type of egocentrism: *the only way to understand the world is only through their perspective.*
- They turn God into a limited man. They assume that God must see things the way we see things, and therefore He should stop the evil. If He allows it to continue, He must be questioned and rejected.
- It reveals their failure to fathom that God's actions and will are in line with a Divine reason that we cannot access.
 - *God is not content with the occurrence of evil and suffering. God does not stop these things from happening because He sees something we do not, not because He is content with evil and suffering to continue.*

Transcending Suffering



Meaning and suffering

- Suffering is not easy. However there are ways to deal with suffering by changing the meaning we give it.
- Suffering can be a way of:
 - Making us realise we have strengths we never thought we had
 - Bring us closer with loved ones or create profound new relationships
 - Evoke gratitude and greater appreciation for life
 - Reinforce or change our beliefs
 - Make us realise that we have, and can pursue, new possibilities

Theism / Atheism (naturalism)

“On the contrary, if the universe were just electrons and selfish genes, meaningless tragedies like the crashing of this bus are exactly what we should expect, along with equally meaningless good fortune. Such a universe would be neither evil nor good in intention. It would manifest no intentions of any kind. In a universe of blind physical forces and genetic replication, some people are going to get hurt, other people are going to get lucky, and you won’t find any rhyme or reason in it, nor any justice. The universe we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil and no good, nothing but blind, pitiless indifference.”

Richard Dawkins, *River Out of Eden*

“Your pain and suffering will be rewarded with eternal bliss in paradise. If you suffered for an whole lifetime and you were dipped in paradise for a moment you would feel that you have never suffered. Evil and suffering exists to test you, elevate you and facilitate a higher spiritual state. It is meant to bring you closer to the Divine, therefore closer to paradise. As a believer, any pain or suffering is a means to absolve you from your shortcomings and sins. When you are tested with evil and suffering it is a sign of Divine love, for He knows you have the ability to overcome the trials in your life. He knows you better than you know yourself.”

A Muslim

The Best of Possible Worlds?



Could God have created a world with less evil and suffering?

- Al-Ghazali, Ibn Taymiyya and Leibniz's response: *this is the best of possible worlds.*
 - God is omnipotent. He did not create a world will less evil and suffering.
 - He is the source of goodness, The Wise and The Knowing.
 - He is maximally perfect.
 - He created *this* world.
 - It is the best of possible worlds based on His maximally perfect wisdom and knowledge.

Al-Ghazali on the best of possible worlds

Everything that God distributes among men such as sustenance, life-span '*ajal*', happiness and sadness, weakness and power, faith and unbelief, obedience and apostasy—all of it is unqualifiedly just with no injustice in it, true with no wrong infecting it. Indeed, all this happens according to a necessary and true order, according to what is appropriate as it is appropriate and in the measure that is proper to it; nor is anything more fitting, more perfect, and more attractive within the realm of possibility. For if something was to exist and remind one of the sheer omnipotence of God and not of the good things accomplished by His action, it would be miserliness that utterly contradicts God's generosity and injustice contrary to divine justice. And if God were not omnipotent, He would be impotent, thereby contradicting the nature of divinity.³⁵

Cited from https://www.academia.edu/22386698/Problems_in_al_Ghazalis_Perfect_World

Does God have to create a world with pointless evil and suffering?

- How do we know it's pointless?
 - Since the world being created is created via God's power, knowledge and wisdom we are epistemologically limited to make such a claim.
- Our confidence that there is a reason for apparent pointless suffering and evil is due to **God's maximal knowledge and wisdom.**

Why not just send us all straight paradise?

- If God were to send everyone to paradise, then a gross violation of justice would take place; God would be treating Moses and the Pharaoh and Hitler and Jesus as the same.
 - A mechanism is needed to ensure that people who enter paradise do so based on merit via God's grace. Life is just a mechanism to see who among us are truly deserving of eternal happiness. As such, life is filled with obstacles, evil and suffering, which act as tests of our conduct.

Why couldn't God create us to always be good?

- God could have created us all to always be good, subsequently sending us all to paradise.
 - That way there would not be a violation of justice.
- There is a key problem with this question:
 - It assumes that the only reason to create us was for us to be sent to paradise or to be good; and that always being good is the best of possible worlds.
 - *Refer to previous slides on God's wisdom.*

“I didn’t ask for this life or test”



Two Answers

- You did not need to be asked to be created:
 - The assumption is we require consent. This further assumes self-ownership. These are metaphysical notions incongruent with Islamic theism. God owns us.
- You know the answer:
 - “And [mention] when your Lord took from the children of Adam - from their loins - their descendants and made them testify of themselves, [saying to them], ‘Am I not your Lord?’ They said, ‘Yes, we have testified.’ [This] - lest you should say on the day of Resurrection, “Indeed, we were of this unaware.” *The Qur'an, Chapter 7, Verse 172*

Does Science Lead to Atheism?



What we will cover?

- Does science lead to atheism?
- Does science disprove religious claims?



“Science leads to atheism”

This false assertion is based on 4 false assumptions:

1. Science is the only yardstick for truth
2. Since science works, its conclusions must be true
3. Science leads to certainty
4. Philosophical and methodological naturalism

1. Science is the only yardstick for truth

- Science has limitations:
 - limited to observation
 - morally neutral
 - cannot delve into the personal
 - cannot answer why things happen
 - cannot address some metaphysical questions
 - There are other sources of knowledge (e.g. testimony)
 - cannot prove necessary truths

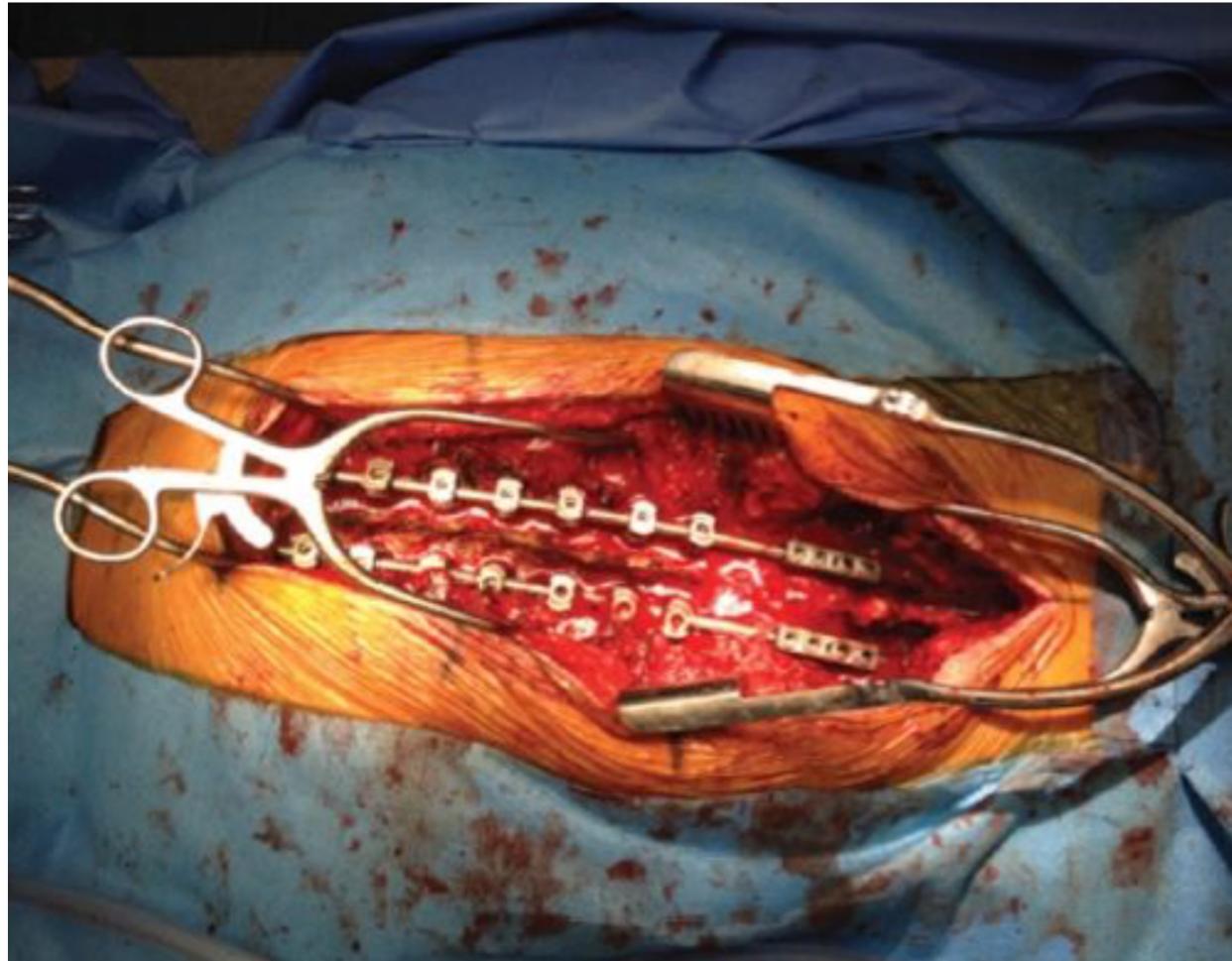
Limited to observation



“At any moment scientists are limited by the observations they have at hand... the limitation is that science is forced to restrict its attention to problems that observations can solve.”

Sober, E. (2010). Empiricism. In: Psillos, S and Curd, M, ed, The Routledge Companion to Philosophy of Science, pp. 137-138.

Morally neutral



Cannot delve in the personal



What is it like for a particular organism to have a specific inner subjective conscious experience?

Why and how do inner subjective conscious experiences arise from neurobiological processes?

Cannot answer ‘why’ things happen

Why did I bake you this cake?



Cannot address some metaphysical Qs

- The nature of the causal link
- Consciousness



Other sources of knowledge

Did Genghis Khan exist?

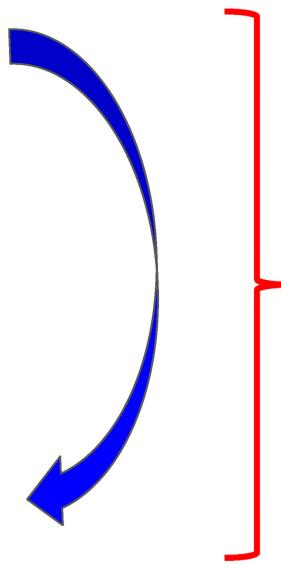


Cannot prove necessary truths

1. All bachelors are unmarried men
2. John is a bachelor
3. Therefore, John is an unmarried man

Necessary Truths

1. All bachelors are unmarried men
2. John is a bachelor
3. Therefore, John is an unmarried man



Logical relation
between the
premises and the
conclusion

Self-Defeating

- The statement:
 - “**Science is the only way to render the truth about the world and reality**”
- Cannot be proven by science!



2. Science works, its conclusions = true

- Workable theories can be false: *phlogiston*
- Theories work even when they contradict each other:
 - “Historically, there are many cases of theories that we now believe to be false but that were empirically quite successful.” *Samir Okasha. Philosophy of Science, A Very Short Introduction, 2002 Oxford University Press, p. 77.*
 - “False models can sometimes work better than true ones” *Evidence and Evolution, Elliot Sober*

3. Science leads to certainty

- Problem of induction
 - There can always be a new observation that can be at odds with our conclusions based on our previous limited data:
 - “Science is revisable. Hence, to talk of scientific ‘proof’ is dangerous, because the term fosters the idea of conclusions that are graven in stone.” *Gillian Barker and Philip Kitcher. Philosophy of Science: A New Introduction. Oxford University Press. 2014, p. 17*

Islamic Sources & Induction

- Contradiction?
 - This is a misplaced contention - a distinction should be made between inductive reasoning and inductive arguments. Inductive reasoning provides certainty for basic types of knowledge. For instance, if I observe X in Y, it follows that Y allows X (i.e. it mirrors the observation and simply states the facts – no conclusions).
 - This type of induction was used in the preservation of the Qur'an and the Prophetic traditions. For example, a companion of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ heard the Qur'an, and he simply repeated what he had heard. He never made a conclusion for a verse that he never heard. For example, a companion wouldn't hear "Iyyaka na'abudu wa iyyaka nasta'een" (it is You we worship and it is You we ask for help) and then conclude "Qul huwa Allahu ahad" (Say, He is God, the uniquely One).

Epistemic status of scientific theories

- Realism:
 - well-confirmed, successful scientific theories are a representation of the actual state of affairs.
 - Fallible.
- Instrumentalism:
 - Successful theories are not a representation of the actual state of affairs and that they are “merely conceptual tools for classifying, systematizing and predicting observational statements.”
- Anti-realism:
 - well-confirmed, successful scientific theories are not a representation of the actual state.

4. Philosophical Naturalism

- Assumes the non-scientific assumption of philosophical naturalism.
 - This is the metaphysical view that there:
 - is no God,
 - no supernatural (no non-physical),
 - and everything can be explained by physical processes
- “If you want a concession, I’ve always said that naturalism is an act of faith...” *Professor Michael Ruse in Stewart, R. B. (2007). Intelligent Design: William A. Dembski & Michael Ruse in Dialogue. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, p.37.*

4. Methodological Naturalism

- Why do scientific explanations do not refer to God in any way?
- Methodological naturalism:
 - For anything to be considered a scientific explanation it cannot refer to Divine power or creativity
 - This does not (in general) contradict God's existence or revelation
 - The physical causes are a manifestation of the Divine will

Methodological Naturalism ≠ Atheism

- “Of course the scientist, as an individual, is free to embrace a reality that transcends naturalism.” Todd, Scott. C. (1999). *A View from Kansas on that Evolution Debate*. Correspondence to Nature. 401 (6752): 423, 30 Sept. Available at:
<https://www.nature.com/articles/46661>
 - Science tells us the how not the why, knowing the how doesn’t negate the why.

Science does NOT lead to atheism

- Science cannot observe God
- There are other sources of knowledge
- Conflation between methodological and philosophical naturalism
- Explaining how things work do not disprove that they have a creator

“Science disproves religion”

- This false assertion is based on the view that scientific conclusions are absolute and certain.
 - Observations and scientific conclusions are not the same

Darwinian Mechanism: Case Study

- Probabilistic
- Based on Assumptions
- Has Disputes

Probabilistic

- “We must acknowledge the possibility that new facts may come to light which will force our successors of the twenty-first century to abandon Darwinism or modify it beyond recognition.” **Richard Dawkins, A Devil’s Chaplain**

Assumptions

- Gradualism
 - Change is “steady, slow, and continuous.” - Charles Darwin
- Tree of life
 - “The history of life cannot properly be represented as a tree.”
Evolutionary Biologist, W. Ford Doolittle (Phylogenetic Classification and the Universal Tree 1999.)
- “All the central assumptions of Neo-Darwinism have been disproven.”
Oxford University Biologist, Denis Noble

Disputes

- Evolution by Natural Genetic Engineering
- Neo Lamarckian Evolution
- Mutation driven evolution

The Way Forward?

- Accept both!
 - How?
 - Darwinism is not accepted into one's belief / creed.
 - It is accepted practically as the best working model we have thus far.
 - Which doesn't mean it is a representation of the actual state of affairs.

Why God is Worthy of Worship



What We Will Cover

- What is worship?
- The Quranic Strategy
- Knowing God
- Why Worship God?
- Everyone Worships
- Does God Need Worship
- Why Did He Create Us for Worship?
- Questions



What is Worship?

- To know God
- Love God
- Obey God
 - humility
- Single out and direct all acts of worship to God alone
 - Gratitude, praise, prayer, charity, supplication, etc.



“It is You we worship and You we ask for help.”

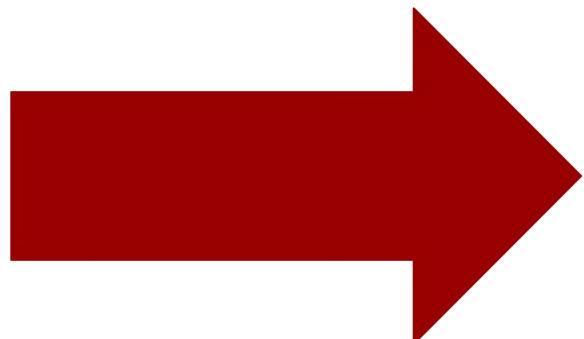
The Qur'an, Chapter 1, Verse 5

The Quranic Strategy

**And We sent not before you any messenger that We revealed to him
that, “There is no deity except Me, so worship Me..”**

The Qur'an, Chapter 21, Verse 25

**God's
Creative
Power**



**God's
Divinity**

Knowing God

“So know, [O Muhammad], that there is no deity except Allah.”

The Qur'an, Chapter 47, Verse 19

- Oneness of His Creative Power:
 - God is the sole, unique creator, sustainer, maintainer and owner of everything that exists.
- Oneness of His Names and Attributes:
 - God's names and attributed are unique, transcendent and they are maximally perfect. They have no deficiency or flaw and are to the highest degree possible.
- Oneness of His Divinity:
 - God is worthy of our worship. He is worthy of our obedience, love, prayers, praise and thanks. He is the only deity worthy of worship. All acts of worship are singled out, and dedicated to Him alone.

Why Worship God?

1. God's right to worship is a necessary fact of His existence:

"Indeed, I am God. There is no deity except Me, so worship Me and establish prayer for My remembrance." *The Qur'an, Chapter 20, Verse 14*

2. God has created and also sustains everything:

"O mankind, remember the favour of God upon you. Is there any creator other than God who provides for you from the heaven and Earth? There is no deity except Him, so how are you deluded?" *The Qur'an, Chapter 35, Verse 3*

3. God provides us with innumerable favours:

"And if you should [try to] count the favours of God, you could not enumerate them. Indeed mankind is [generally] most unjust and ungrateful."

The Qur'an, Chapter 14, Verse 34

Why Worship God?

4. Self-love leads to loving God:

“Whoever is so besotted by his fleshy appetites as to lack this love neglects his Lord and Creator. He possesses no authentic knowledge of Him; his gaze is limited to his cravings and to things of sense.”

Al-Ghazali. *Al-Ghazali on Love, Longing, Intimacy & Contentment*. ITS, p. 25.

5. God is the Most Loving:

“He is The Forgiving, The Loving.” *The Qur'an, Chapter 85, Verse 14*

“And [yet], among the people are those who take other than God as equals [to Him]. They love them as they [should] love God. But those who believe are stronger in love of God.” *The Qur'an, Chapter 2, Verse 165*

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said, “God is more affectionate to His servants than a mother to her children.” *Narrated by Abu Dawud*

Why Worship God?

6. Natural born worshippers:

“I did not create the Jinn [spirit world], nor mankind, except to worship Me.”

The Qur'an, Chapter 51, Verse 56

7. Obeying God is most rational:

“[A]nd obey God and the Prophet so that you may be given mercy.”

The Qur'an, Chapter 3, Verse 132

Obedience to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ as a result of obeying God, as He commands us to do so.

Everyone Worships

Man cannot not worship:

“God puts forward this illustration: can a man who has several partners for his masters, of which they are at odds with each other, be considered equal to a man devoted wholly to one master? All praise belongs to God, though most of them do not know.”*The Qur'an, Chapter 39, Verse 29*

“Have you not seen the one who takes as his god his own desire?”*The Qur'an, Chapter 45, Verse 23*

Worshipping God liberates your soul from being enslaved to these *several masters*.

“Man cannot not worship”

“Equipped as he is by his very nature for worship, **man cannot not worship**; and if his outlook is cut off from the spiritual plane, he will find a God to worship at some lower level, thus endowing something relative with what belongs only to the Absolute. Hence the existence today of so many “words to conjure with” like “freedom”, “equality”, “literacy”, “science”, “civilisation”, words at the utterance of which a multitude of souls fall prostrate in sub-mental adoration. The superstitions of freedom and equality are not merely the results but also partly of the causes of the general disorder, for each in its own way is a revolt against hierarchy; and they are all the more pernicious for being provisions of the two of the highest impulses of man. *Corruptio optimi pessima*, the corruption of the best is corruption at its worst; but restore the ancient order and the two idols in question will evaporate from the plane of this world (leaving legitimate earthly aspirations for freedom and equality room to breathe) to take their place once more, transformed, at the very summit of the hierarchy... **The desire for freedom is above all the desire for God, absolute freedom being an essential aspect of Divinity.**”

Martin Lings, *Ancient Beliefs and Modern Superstitions*. Suhail Academy, pp. 45 - 46.

Does God Need Worship?

Misunderstanding the nature of God:

“Allah is the Free of need, the Praiseworthy.” *The Qur'an, Chapter 22, Verse 64*

God does not need us to worship Him at all. He gains nothing from our worship, and our lack of it takes nothing away from God. We worship God because - through God's wisdom and mercy - He created us that way. God made worship good and beneficial for us, from both a worldly and spiritual perspective.

Why Did He Create Us for Worship?

God loves good:

- God is a maximally good Being. Therefore His actions are not only good, they are expressions of His nature.
- The fact that He created rational creatures who freely choose to worship Him and do good (some even exalting in virtue like the prophets) then be given eternal life in the presence of God, to pass an eternity of intimate love and companionship, is the greatest story ever told.
- Since God loves all good, it is clear why He would make this story a reality.

“If your Lord had pleased, He would have made all people a single community, but they continue to have their differences—except those on whom your Lord has mercy—for He created them to be this way.” *The Qur'an, Chapter 11, Verse 118*